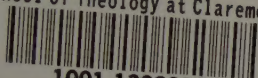


School of Theology at Claremont



1001 1338030

Edmund Mellen



The Library
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
AT CLAREMONT

WEST FOOTHILL AT COLLEGE AVENUE
CLAREMONT, CALIFORNIA 91711

BP
585
B3
W44
1988

ANNIE BESANT
and Progressive Messianism
(1847-1933)

Catherine Lowman Wessinger

Studies in Women and Religion
Volume 26

The Edwin Mellen Press
Lewiston/Queenston

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Wessinger, Catherine Lowman.

Annie Besant and progressive Messianism (1847-1933) / Catherine Lowman Wessinger.

p. cm -- (Studies in women and religion ; v. 26)

Bibliography: p.

Includes index.

ISBN 0-88946-523-1

1. Besant, Annie Wood, 1847-1933. 2. Theosophists--Biography. 3. Reformers--Biography. 4. Messianism--History. 5. Messianism, Political--History. 6. Millennialism--History. I. Title.

II. Series.

BP585.B3W44 1988

299'.934'0924--dc19

[B]

Theology Library

88-11937

SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY CIP

AT CLAREMONT

California

This is volume 26 in the continuing series

Studies in Women and Religion

Volume 26 ISBN 0-88946-523-1

SWR Series ISBN 0-88946-549-5

Copyright 1988 Catherine Lowman Wessinger

All rights reserved. For information contact:

The Edwin Mellen Press
P.O. Box 450
Lewiston, New York
USA 14092

The Edwin Mellen Press
P.O. Box 67
Queenston, Ontario
CANADA L0S 1L0

Printed in the United States of America

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many Theosophists have been most gracious in their assistance of my research. My thanks to Dora Kunz, immediate past President of the Theosophical Society in America, for allowing me to visit the national headquarters in Wheaton, Illinois, in 1980 to research several journals that are not readily available elsewhere. Mary Jo Schneider Kokochak, was the librarian at the Olcott Library and Research Center in Wheaton during the time I was researching this book. She was always most helpful in mailing books to me and allowing me to keep books for extended periods of time. The staff at the Theosophical Society's international headquarters in Adyar, Madras, India were helpful to me during my stay there in the winter of 1981. My special thanks go to Dr. Pran Nath, then the head librarian, and the staff of The Adyar Library and Research Centre. I would especially like to acknowledge two librarians, M. Murali and J. Lalitha Kumar, brother and sister, who befriended me and made me a part of their family. I thank Joy Mills, Director of Krotona Institute, School of Theosophy, in Ojai, California, for reading over the section entitled "Continuity and Discontinuity with Blavatsky Concerning the World-Teacher." My thanks go also to Ms. Mills and the fine staff at Krotona for a very pleasant stay there in 1985, which enabled me to hear J. Krishnamurti speak to his public audiences in the Oak Grove. I would like to thank Robert Adams of the Order of the Star who very graciously sent me the Order's literature and wrote extended letters in answer to my questions. Individuals who have kindly lent me books from their personal libraries include Loretta Jones, Pat Rosengarten, Douglas Shiell, Vicki Burdick, and Pam Stillwater.

After all the assistance I have received from Theosophists and the friendships that have been extended to me, it is my hope that Theosophists will not find this book in any way objectionable, and that they will understand the need for complete historical objectivity and total truthfulness in the writing of history. Of course, I alone am responsible for the interpretation and presentation of the historical materials that I have gathered.

My thanks go to Dr. Robert D. Baird, University of Iowa, who directed the writing of this work while it was in the dissertation stage, and also to Dr. Dwight Bozeman, University of Iowa, who also provided much guidance at that time. I would like to thank Dr. Robert Gnuse, Dr. Denis Janz, Dr. Kenneth Keulman, of Loyola University, New Orleans, and Mark Feder and Julieta Ruppert for reading over the manuscript and giving me their comments.

Special assistance in computing has very kindly been provided by Father James Bradley, S.J., James O'Meara, Daniel Goldstein, Dr. Constance Mui, and Nadira King, all of Loyola University, New Orleans.

Special thanks go to my parents and my friends who have supported me in many ways during the writing of this work. Finally, I offer my thanks to my husband, Dave, and son, Clinton, for their support, and with my apologies for the time spent away from home.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER		Page
I.	INTRODUCTION	1
	The Many Lives of Annie Besant . . .	1
	The Ultimate Concern of Annie Besant	7
	Notes	15
II.	MILLENARIANISM	19
	The Meaning of Millenarianism . . .	19
	Millenarianism and the Doctrine of Progress	27
	Millenarianism and Progress in Nineteenth Century England	30
	Millenarianism and Progress in Annie Besant's Thought	33
	Notes	35
III.	BIOGRAPHY OF ANNIE BESANT	41
	Christian Girlhood--A Growing Concern with Suffering	41
	Theism--Struggle for Independence .	47
	Atheism--A Sense of Mission	50
	Interest in Science	56
	Growing Interest in Religion and Initial Contacts with the Theosophical Society	57
	Socialism--Greater Effort for Social Reform	60
	Theosophy--Answers to Questions and Political Manuevering	65
	Interest in India	70
	Leadbeater--Occult Faculty and Scandal	72
	Presidentship of the Theosophical Society	73
	Expectation of the World-Teacher . .	74
	Mission to India	78
	The World-Teacher	90
	Notes	98
IV.	ANNIE BESANT'S EARLY THOUGHT	109

Late Victorian Social Conditions and Response	109
Millenarians Trends in Besant's Atheism	
Initial Questioning--Concern with Suffering	115
Monism	117
Interest in Forming a New Religion	126
Belief in Progress	130
Summary	136
Millenarian Trends in Besant's Socialism	137
The Transition to Theosophy	143
Notes	148
 V. ANNIE BESANT'S THEOSOPHICAL THOUGHT	 157
Early History of the Theosophical Society and Its Principle Texts .	157
The Attraction of Theosophy for Annie Besant	169
Monism	170
The Laws of Karma and Sacrifice . .	175
Altruism Taught by Blavatsky . . .	178
Study of Comparative Religion . . .	181
Millenarian Elements of Theosophy Collective Salvation	182
The One Existence Manifested in Seven Realms	185
The Superhuman Agents	191
The Mechanics of Attaining the Millennial Condition	
The Individual Path	193
The Evolution of the Human Race	195
Notes	201
 VI. ANNIE BESANT AND INDIA	 209
India's Mission to the World	209
The Importance of Hinduism	214
Education	223
Social Reform	229
Politics	
Problems Caused by British Rule . .	234
India Is a Unified Nation	238
Besant and Gandhi	244
Notes	252
 VII. THE WORLD-TEACHER	 263
Reasons for Expecting the Imminent	

Appearance of the World-Teacher . . .	263
The Manu and the World-Teacher . . .	271
Continuity and Discontinuity with Blavatsky Concerning the World-Teacher	275
The New World Religion	279
Krishnamurti The Process of Identification with the World-Teacher	284
Implications of Krishnamurti's Message for Annie Besant's Beliefs	288
Annie Besant's Response	292
Notes	298
VIII. CONCLUSION	307
Elements of Continuity in Annie Besant's Thought	307
Millenarian Elements in Annie Besant's Thought	310
Krishnamurti as the World-Teacher .	317
Notes	320
IX. EPILOGUE	323
Progressive Messianism and Post- Millennialism in the New Age . . .	323
BIBLIOGRAPHY	349
INDEX	373

CHAPTER I

Introduction

The Many Lives of Annie Besant

This book is primarily about the religious thought of Annie Besant and traces the development of her thought throughout her life. I have written a biographical chapter, because Annie Besant's ideas were always the motivation for intense and energetic action in the world. For an even more complete account of the facts of Annie Besant's life, the reader should refer to the two-volume biography written by Arthur H. Nethercot. I would contend, however, that Annie Besant's biographers have focused on her diverse activities and have not bothered to study the records of her thought. Thus, Besant's biographers have often been baffled by the many different expressions that her interests took in her outward activities and affiliations.

A brief survey of Annie Besant's biography shows that her life (1847-1933) took the form of many stages and interests during which she became known as a great female orator, and she was often cited as being one of the great women of her time.¹

Raised in the Church of England, she was tutored by an Evangelical lady, and she subsequently married a minister of the Church of England. During her marriage she came to question the basic dogmas of her church. Giving up belief in the divinity of Christ, the atonement, and special inspiration of the Bible, she left her husband and for a brief time considered herself to be a theist. She moved to a position which Charles Bradlaugh, a leader of the Freethought movement in Great Britain, informed her was atheistic. A close relationship developed between Bradlaugh and Besant,

and they worked together in speaking out for the right of free thought and speech, and for improvement in the lot of the working class. The main organ for their views was The National Reformer as well as books and pamphlets published by their Freethought Publishing Company. They received the most publicity for their court fight over the right to publish information concerning contraception and Bradlaugh's six year struggle to take his seat in the House of Commons.

From 1874 to 1889 Besant considered herself an atheist and a materialist. She also showed a strong interest in science, attending science classes as well as teaching them. Besant began to be attracted to the socialist position as the best means to help the working class and she joined the Fabian Society and subsequently the Social Democratic Federation. She organized the strike of the London Match Girls for better working conditions, and she was elected to the London School Board.

Besant began to question her materialistic position, and after reading H. P. Blavatsky's The Secret Doctrine she soon joined the Theosophical Society. She quickly rose to a position of leadership in the Theosophical Society and became president in 1907 following Henry S. Olcott's death. In addition to her administrative and lecturing duties as president of the Theosophical Society, Besant undertook to improve social conditions in India where the Theosophical Society has its international headquarters. She lectured on social reform, and she founded many schools, including the Central Hindu College which became the nucleus of the Benares Hindu University.

Finally, Besant entered Indian politics and was an early leader in the demand for Indian Home Rule. She

wanted India and Great Britian to be united as equal partners in an Indo-British Commonwealth. Besant's internment by the British government in India raised a storm of protest and attracted a great deal of attention. As a result she was elected president of the National Congress of 1918. Besant's popularity in India did not last long due to her opposition to Gandhi's Satyagraha² and her support of the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms. Despite the dramatic drop in her popularity, Besant continued to work for Indian Home Rule. She created a constitutional convention that resulted in the Commonwealth of India Bill. When this bill received no support she shifted her own support to the constitution drawn up by Motilal Nehru.

Concurrent with her political work in India, Besant had been announcing the imminent coming of the World-Teacher, whom she identified as being the Christ or the Lord Maitreya. She adopted a young Indian boy, J. Krishnamurti, and educated him, for she felt that he would be the physical vehicle of the Lord Maitreya. A large organization was built around Krishnamurti known as the Order of the Star in the East.

When looking at this bewildering array of careers, many historians as well as many of Besant's contemporaries have failed to see any consistency of thought connecting one phase to another. Besant's friend, Bernard Shaw, commented as follows:

Mrs. Besant is a woman of swift decisions. She sampled many movements and societies before she finally found herself, and her transitions were not gradual, she always came into a movement with a bound and was preaching the new faith before the astonished spectator had the least suspicion that the

old one was shaken. People said, She will die a Roman Catholic,' which was their way of expressing the extreme of mutability for an Englishwoman.³

H. J. Laski stated that socialism was "a passing phase" for Besant in "the successive ardours of her tempestuous career."⁴ Susan Budd reported that Besant's conversion to Theosophy "to almost all secularists but herself seemed to be incompatible with secularism."⁵ Geoffrey West, Besant's first biographer, concurred and said that by converting to Theosophy Besant rejected her earlier ideals held as an atheist, Freethinker, and socialist.

. . . it appears undeniable that in Theosophy Mrs. Besant has increasingly rejected her earlier ideals, denied what, at her most masculine, her most modern, her most significant, she stood for. If this criticism of Theosophy is to be accepted, then it must be accepted too that the spiritual pilgrimage of Mrs. Besant has by her own highest ideals ended in spiritual failure.⁶

Some authors, including Bernard Shaw, have seen Besant's many changes of affiliation as the result of changes in attachment to love interests or shifts in attachment to "new male idols."⁷

Warren Sylvester Smith in comparing George Bernard Shaw to Besant made the following statement:

Bernard Shaw, like his old friend, Annie Besant, was destined to live many "lives"--author, journalist, orator, politician, committeeman, man of the world, and so forth--as he himself has enumerated them.

They were held together, more securely than Annie's, by his twin beliefs in Socialism and the Life Force.⁸

The "many 'lives'" of Annie Besant was a reference to the titles of Nethercot's two volume biography of Besant, the most complete and scholarly that has been produced. While Nethercot was certainly aware of elements of continuity such as Besant's desire for service and sacrifice, and her desire to create a civilization on earth characterized by brotherhood, the very titles imply disjointedness and discontinuity. Nethercot wrote that "her life can easily be interpreted in terms of her sacrifices, not for a single cause, but for a whole series of disparate and often irreconcilable causes."⁹ Nethercot said that Besant refused to admit that her career as a Freethinker, her socialism, and her Theosophy were incompatible.¹⁰ He described Besant's work concerning Home Rule for India and the coming of the World-Teacher as "two disparate objectives."¹¹

In all these transformations and--as they were looked upon by the stupefied outside world--tergiversations, Annie Besant seemingly felt that all her labours and sufferings were more than compensated for by her conviction that she was martyring herself in a series of just causes, each of which, in her own mind, grew naturally and reasonably out of its apparently antithetical predecessor. And in every case she ended as a leader in the cause she had adopted.¹²

The key phrase here is that Besant saw continuity in these different phases of her life "in her own mind." Using a religio-historical method, this book

will show that beginning in her atheistic phase onward, Besant's thought does show strong elements of continuity. Besant's thought as an atheist and a socialist contained elements that would lead her to a pattern of ultimate concern that took the form of a fully developed millenarianism which was inextricably entwined with her Theosophy and which was at the basis of her work in India and as the announcer of the World-Teacher. Besant's millenarianism can be seen as developing from her desire to ameliorate current social conditions and from her belief in progress, both being typically Victorian attitudes. Annie Besant's millenarianism will finally be shown to be an example of a relatively new type of millenarianism in the West which is not solely dependent upon Christianity for its ideology and is, in fact, far removed from the mainstream of Christian thought. It is progressive and optimistic in its view of history and looks for the imminent appearance of a superhuman agent or saviour (a characteristic that has in the past been associated with the pre-millenarian view of history). This type of millenarianism, that I will call progressive messianism, is now an increasingly common pattern of religiosity for persons who choose to step outside the mainstream religions of the West. These persons may identify themselves as looking forward to the imminent "New Age" or even the "Age of Aquarius." After an examination of Annie Besant's life and thought, it will be shown that many modern New Age groups and thinkers unrelated organizationally to the Theosophical Society are continuing to propigate millenarian ideas similar to the ideas that Annie Besant proclaimed to the world in the early part of the twentieth century. At this time, Annie Besant consciously functioned as a type of

John the Baptist, announcing to the world the imminent new age and the divine teacher whose message would bring about a transformation of humanity.

The Ultimate Concern of Annie Besant

This study of Annie Besant's thought will include a search for her "ultimate concern." As a historian of religions, it is incumbent upon me to begin my study with a definition of religion, especially since there is currently no consensus among historians of religions as to the meaning of the word. In defining religion as ultimate concern, I am relying on the work of Robert D. Baird who has taken Paul Tillich's phrase and defined ultimate concern as "a concern which is more important than anything else in the universe for the person involved."¹³ Further, a "pattern of ultimate concern" can be defined functionally as "the complex of beliefs as related to the subject's primary notion of ultimacy which was held for a demonstrable time."¹⁴ In studying patterns of ultimate concern, continuity and/or discontinuity may be found by the historian of religions. This work is primarily concerned with Annie Besant's patterns of ultimate concern on the ideal level, i.e. what she professed her ultimate concern to be in her speeches and writings; however, the initial biographical chapter provides ample evidence that on the empirical level, Besant's actions were in agreement with her professed ultimate goals.

In using Baird's religio-historical method, I take an objective approach to the study of Annie Besant's life and thought. My goal is to describe Annie Besant's patterns of ultimate concern and not to interject my own views as to the truth or falsity of

her beliefs, nor to attempt to construct psychological theories accounting for her beliefs. Further, I wish to take the same attitude in discussing modern New Age millenarian beliefs. The hope of a new and perfect age instituted by some superhuman agent is obviously a recurring and common pattern of ultimate concern for human beings, and I will briefly examine possible reasons for this in the Conclusion. For the most part, I will confine myself to discussing this pattern historically rather than engaging in an extensive psychological analysis.

The religio-historical method does not presuppose continuity or discontinuity in the history of a person's or a community's successive patterns of ultimate concern. In the thought of Annie Besant we will find that there was a continuity of ultimate concern from her days as a Freethinker and atheist onwards. The sources for this contention are primary contemporaneous documentation,¹⁵ or statements of beliefs made by Annie Besant at the time they were believed. Primary later documentation¹⁶ or records written by Besant after the period to which they refer indicate that the continuity of ultimate concern may even extend from her girlhood. However, this conclusion must be tentative since the believer may project present beliefs into the past.¹⁷ So, while primary later documentation may or may not be an indication of past beliefs, it is a definite indication of beliefs held at the time of writing.

Annie Besant wrote An Autobiography from her point of view as a Theosophist. In it she related that as a child she dreamed of being a Christian martyr, suffering for as well as preaching a new religion.¹⁸ This may be an interpretation of the past from her present

vantage point or this may be an indication that her desire to sacrifice herself began at an early age, and was closely correlated with a desire to found a new religion, which was an important theme in her thought. Other than this statement there is no way to determine what may have been Annie Besant's ultimate concern as a girl and as a member of the Church of England. The same is true of her brief phase as a theist. This was a time of transition for Besant. She was primarily concerned with testing old beliefs such as the divinity of Jesus Christ, or the inspiration and authenticity of biblical scriptures. An ultimate concern was not articulated at that time, but Besant's statements show a strong leaning toward what she would shortly specify as her ultimate concern. In writing against the doctrine of the atonement Besant stated that its only redeeming feature was that it taught the "divine idea of self-sacrifice."¹⁹ While expounding on the nature of religious education that should be imparted to children, Besant wrote that the most important aspect of religion was not devotion directed toward God but action based on a sense of duty to one's fellow human beings.²⁰

As an atheist and Freethinker Besant settled on a pattern of ultimate concern that despite continued questioning was to inform her thought for fifteen years of her adult life. In the work that marked Besant's transition to atheism Besant pointed to service as her ultimate concern.

Is the mainspring of our actions to be the idea of duty to God, or that of loyalty to law and to man's well-being? We cannot serve God in any real sense; we are awed before the unknown, but we cannot serve it. For the

Mighty, for the Incomprehensible, what can we do? But we can serve man, ay, and he needs our service; service of brain and hand, service untiring and unceasing, service through life and unto death. The race to which we belong (our own families and kinsfolk, and then the community at large) has the first claim on our allegiance, a claim from which nothing can release us until death drops a veil over our work.²¹

As an atheist Besant did not articulate a specific definition of service but we may draw on the "Principles and Objects of the National Secular Society" as reflecting Besant's views and define service as being "the promotion of human happiness and improvement."²² Besant often used self-sacrifice as a synonym for service thus implying that service entailed the giving up of one's self-interest for the sake of others. Besant believed that the utilitarian ethic was an expression of the principle of service or self-sacrifice.

It [Utility] includes all sublimest virtue; for self-sacrifice and devotion yield the purest forms of happiness to be found on earth.²³

There can be no doubt that Besant pursued her ultimate concern of service with "religious" fervor. As will be seen in the chapter on Besant's early thought, her atheistic pattern of ultimate concern or those beliefs related to her notion of ultimacy contained additional elements marking continuity with her Theosophical thought.

Besant's socialistic writings did not contain a statement of ultimate concern, but her adoption of the

socialist position can be seen as an expression of her ultimate concern. Upon becoming a socialist, Besant did not cease to be an atheist and a materialist, hence there was no need for a shift in her metaphysical views or in her ultimate concern. She simply came to see socialism as the best means by which she could serve. Even though Besant gave up activity with socialist organizations for a time, Besant's conversion to Theosophy in no way meant that she had abandoned her views on socialism as the best economic and governmental scheme. Later she would try to embody her socialistic vision in a constitution for India, and she believed that socialism would be part of the coming New Civilization.

A major reason why Besant found Theosophy highly attractive was because of its teachings concerning service and self-sacrifice, and because of its vision for the future of humanity that would be obtained through individual self-sacrifice. As a Theosophist Besant wrote that there existed human beings called Masters who

. . . recognize that life is only meant for service, who recognize that the only thing that makes life worthy is that it shall be burnt in the fire of devotion, in order that the world may be lighted and may be warmed. That is the goal which ends, not in liberation, but in perfect service. Liberation only when all souls are liberated, when all together enter into the bliss unspeakable, and which, when that period of bliss is over, brings them out again as conscious co-workers with unbroken memory in the higher spiritual regions; for they have won their

right to be conscious workers forever in all future Manvantaras [material manifestations]; for the Life of Love never gives liberation from service, and as long as eternity endures the soul that loves works for and serves the universe.²⁴

From this description of the Masters it can be seen that for Besant as a Theosophist the final goal was not liberation or enlightenment, but to live a life of perfect service or self-sacrifice. Service was the result of perceiving that all beings were part of a great whole that could be called God. As a Theosophist, Besant defined service as bringing one's individual will into complete alignment with the Divine Will.²⁵ Besant taught that in addition to being the goal, service was also the means by which each person could attain to high spiritual evolution. Service was the prerequisite of being able to come into touch with and receive the guidance of the Masters.²⁶ Besant described each individual's early attempts at service as being imperfect, but she strongly felt there could be no individual progress unless the motivating desire was for the progress of others.²⁷ Besant, extrapolating from Blavatsky's teachings, called this giving up of the sense of self to do the Divine Will and serve others the "Law of Sacrifice," a natural law governing the evolution of spirit.²⁸ Besant felt that service of others regarded as separate from ourselves was mere altruism.

. . . the deepest joy and the highest pleasure come in serving that which is in very truth the better self of each; so as we grow in spiritual life and understand the true oneness of humanity, we shall find in

that humanity the best beloved. We shall serve our higher self in serving it, and thus once more we come back to that from which we started, the Invisible, the One and the All.²⁹

Service was the keynote of Besant's activities in India and of her understanding of Indian religion and culture. She felt that the caste system was characterized by service. She interpreted dharmā as duty, meaning service. She interpreted the "nonattached action" of the Bhagavad Gītā as self-sacrifice, the giving up of the sense of self to do the will of God. She organized the Brothers of Service to promote social reform in India. All of Besant's schools and organizations for young people in India, such as the boy scouts and the Sons and Daughters of India sought to inculcate the importance of service and citizenship. Finally her work in India was seen as a service not just to India but to the world, for India was to play an important part in the world's future.

Thus the millenarian movement that Besant created could hardly avoid service as its dominant theme. Besant called the World-Teacher the "Lord of Service" and "the Greatest of Servers."³⁰ The World-Teacher was to inaugurate the beginning of a New Civilization that would be characterized by Brotherhood. Brotherhood resulted when individuals perceived that they were a part of a divine whole or unity and service was the expression of that perception. The constant progress of humanity occurred due to the gradual bringing of individual wills into union with the Divine Will.³¹ Besant believed that the World-Teacher would deliver a message that would become the New Religion and thus would shape the New Civilization. Service would be at

the heart of the New Religion. The New Religion would take as its motto the one she and W. T. Stead had devised for the strike of the London Match Girls, "The union of all who love in the service of all who suffer."³²

Notes

¹Arthur H. Nethercot, The First Five Lives of Annie Besant (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1960), pp. 1, 343; Arthur H. Nethercot, The Last Four Lives of Annie Besant (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1963), p. 411; Geoffrey West, "Annie Besant" in Six Brilliant Englishwomen (London: Gerald Howe, 1930), pp. 9, 87; Bernard Shaw, "Mrs. Besant's Passage through Fabian Socialism," in The Annie Besant Centenary Book, ed. James H. Cousins (Adyar, Madras: The Besant Centenary Celebrations Committee, 1947), p. 19.

²Sanskrit words such as Satyagraha that have had wide and common usage in scholarly writings concerning India will not be underlined. Nor will words such as karma and buddhi be underlined since they have become anglicized, at least in Theosophical terminology. All other foreign words will be underlined.

³Shaw, p. 17.

⁴H. J. Laski, "Fabian Socialism," in Ideas and Beliefs of the Victorians, ed. British Broadcasting Corporation (London: Sylvan Press, 1949), p. 82.

⁵Susan Budd, Varieties of Unbelief: Atheists and Agnostics in English Society 1850-1960 (London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd., 1977), P. 69.

⁶West, p. 87.

⁷Norman and Jeanne MacKenzie, The Fabians (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1977), pp. 45-48; Warren Sylvester Smith, The London Heretics 1870-1914 (London: Constable & Co Ltd, 1967), p. 161; Nethercot, The Last Four Lives, pp. 11-12, 461.

⁸Smith, p. 279.

⁹Nethercot, The Last Four Lives, pp. 461-62.

¹⁰Nethercot, The First Five Lives, p. 310.

¹¹Nethercot, The Last Four Lives, p. 356.

¹²Ibid., p. 12.

¹³Robert D. Baird, Category Formation and the History of Religions (The Hague: Mouton, 1971), p. 18. The religio-historical method begins with functional definitions of the categories of phenomena that are to be studied. These definitions are stipulative in that it is recognized that there is no necessary connection between words and things. A definition is stipulated to remove ambiguity concerning what is being studied. These definitions are functional, because while recognizing that any word can be stipulated to mean anything, the purpose of these definitions is to provide meaningful and useful tools by which the data may be examined.

Functional definitions differ from lexical definitions which merely give the history of the ways in which words have been used, and real definitions which seek to define things. Since only words can be defined and a real definition is concerned with the analysis of things, Richard Robinson in Definition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954) has suggested that real definitions not be considered definitions at all. Real definitions often take the form of a search for an "essence." It is suggested that there is no such thing as an "essence" and that the search for an essence actually entails the search for a non-existent identity of the numerous definitions of an ambiguous word or the recommendation of an ideal or a point of view as worthy of allegiance (Baird, pp. 11-13). Thus the search for essence entails a normative point of view.

In the study of religion, real definitions are used by those who take an essential-intuitional approach, and this is most often seen in those who study the phenomenology of religion. Persons following this method feel that the proper place to make definitions is at the end of one's study rather than at the beginning. Thus the scholar is operating with an implicit definition since he feels that he is able to recognize religious phenomena intuitively. The phenomenological understanding of religion of someone such as Eliade gives an ontological status to the "sacred" and to transhistorical structures and systems of symbols and myths. These are assumed to have real existence although no theologizing is done to support this contention.

The religio-historical method using functional definitions at the beginning of the study is a descriptive rather than a normative approach. The historian is interested in describing the religious thought of a person or group and not in judging the truth or falsity of the religious beliefs being

studied. The description is supported by the historical data and not by any normative assumptions.

In defining religion as "ultimate concern," Professor Baird does not mean this to refer to the subjective apprehension of Ultimate Reality. Since the religio-historical method does not proceed on a normative level, it can not be concerned with the "Ultimate." Since this is a functional-stipulative definition of religion, it is not being recommended as the real definition of religion. Other historians may prefer to stipulate different definitions of religion which allow them to ask different questions of the historical data.

Baird stipulates that history is "the descriptive study of the human past" (Baird, p. 32). Thus the history of religions is

. . . a description of the ultimate concerns of men and communities in the past (including the immediate past which we sometimes mistakenly call the present). . . . The history of religions involves the attempt to study the ultimate concerns of persons and communities in their historical givenness, ascertaining how subordinate things and penultimate matters relate to that most important concern reflected in their thought (ideal level) and or in their lives (empirical level) (Baird, p. 35).

Baird defines a religio-historical "understanding" as any valid knowledge about religion communicable in propositional form. All statements must be verified with historical data, and this precludes other kinds of understanding including normative and psychological.

¹⁴George M. Williams, The Quest for Meaning of Svāmī Vivekānanda: A Study of Religious Change (Chico, CA: New Horizons Press, 1974), p. 6.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 7.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 8.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Annie Besant, Annie Besant: An Autobiography (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1908), pp. 42-43.

¹⁹Annie Besant, "On the Atonement," in My Path to Atheism (London: Freethought Publishing Company, 1877), p. 31.

²⁰Annie Besant, "On the Religious Education of Children," in My Path to Atheism (London: Freethought Publishing Company, 1877), p. 99.

²¹Annie Besant, "On the Nature and Existence of God," in My Path to Atheism (London: Freethought Publishing Company, 1877), p. 140.

²²Annie Besant, The Fruits of Christianity (London: Freethought Publishing Company, n.d.), p. 15.

²³Annie Besant, "Constructive Rationalism," in My Path to Atheism (London: Freethought Publishing Company, 1877), p. 173.

²⁴Annie Besant, The Spiritual Life (Chicago: The Theosophical Press, 1923), p. 85.

²⁵Annie Besant, Duties of the Theosophist (Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1917), p. 25.

²⁶Annie Besant, "The Theosophic Life," The Theosophist 30 (March 1909): 524.

²⁷Annie Besant, In the Outer Court, American ed. (Chicago: The Theosophical Press, 1923), pp. 13, 15-16.

²⁸Annie Besant, "The Brotherhood of Religions," The Theosophist 32 (December 1910): 328; Annie Besant, The Ancient Wisdom, 7th Adyar ed. (Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1966), pp. 303-20.

²⁹Besant, The Spiritual Life, pp. 148-49.

³⁰Annie Besant, "Some Questions Concerning the Order of the Star in the East," The Herald of the Star 10 (August 1921): 232; Annie Besant, "The Future of the Order," The Herald of the Star 16 (September 1927): 345.

³¹Annie Besant, The New Civilisation: Four Lectures Delivered at the Queen's Hall, London, in June 1927 (London: The Theosophical Publishing House Limited, 1927), p. 52.

³²*Ibid.*, p. 41.

CHAPTER II

Millenarianism

The Meaning of Millenarianism

In this book, I identify millenarianism as being Annie Besant's pattern of ultimate concern in her Theosophical thought and find elements conducive to millenarianism in her earlier thought. The complex of beliefs related to Besant's ultimate concern of service took the form of millenarianism. Besant extended her ultimate concern to the entire world and set herself the task of creating a transformed humanity. Millenarianism as a pattern of ultimate concern or a form of religion must be functionally defined with an eye to the available data.

There is no consistent use of terminology among historians and sociologists who study what is variously called millenarianism, millenarism, or millennialism. This book will use "millenarianism" as a generic term, and the adjectives "millenarian" and "millennial" will be used interchangeably. A very general definition of millenarianism is "any conception of a perfect age to come, or of a perfect land to be made accessible."¹

Millenarianism has been studied in many cultures and contexts outside the western world. However, for the study of Annie Besant's millenarianism it is necessary to relate her thought to the history of Christian millenarianism. Christian thought concerning the perfect age to come is based on the New Testament book of Revelation and other Old Testament books such as Daniel and Isaiah. In Christian thought the perfect age is often described as lasting one thousand years, hence the term millennium. Scholarly studies of the various interpretations of the millennium have given rise to the terms "pre-millenarianism," "post-millen-

nialism," and "amillennialism." Originally these terms were applied to Christian conceptions of the millennium, but now the terms pre-millenarianism and post-millennialism, in particular, are generally used to denote two different views of history and time.

Augustine's view that the millennium was equivalent to the history of the Christian Church on earth and that there would be no future millennium was accepted by the Church as orthodox doctrine for many centuries.² This point of view is called amillennialism. The term pre-millenarianism initially was used by scholars to denote the belief that nature and the world were decaying and becoming corrupt and that Jesus Christ was expected to return to earth in a catastrophic manner to establish his reign for one thousand years to be followed by the Last Judgment.³ The term post-millennialism was used to specify the view that Christian agencies would gradually overcome evil so that the millennium would be created on earth following which time Christ would return.⁴

In a general sense the terms pre-millenarianism and post-millennialism can be used to denote two opposing views of history without necessary reference to Christian prophecy. Pre-millenarianism denotes a pessimistic view of history. The world is evil and steadily becoming more corrupt every day. The millennium will be brought about in a catastrophic manner by supernatural or superhuman agencies. Post-millennialism is an optimistic view of history that sees a gradual improvement in conditions and more continuity with the past. Human beings work to bring about the millennium but they remain under the direction of a superhuman or divine agency.⁵

Most scholarly definitions of millenarianism are actually definitions of pre-millenarianism. The two most commonly used definitions have been provided by Norman Cohn and Yonina Talmon. Cohn defined millenarianism (pre-millenarianism) as a belief in a salvation which would be

(a) collective in the sense that it is to be enjoyed by the faithful as a group;

(b) terrestrial, in the sense that it is to be realised on this earth and not in some otherworldly heaven;

(c) imminent, in the sense that it is to come both soon and suddenly;

(d) total, in the sense that it is utterly to transform life on earth, so that the new dispensation will be no mere improvement on the present but perfection itself;

(e) accomplished by agencies which are consciously regarded as supernatural.⁶

Yonina Talmon provided a similar definition which identified millenarian (pre-millenarian) movements as groups who "expect imminent, total, ultimate, this-worldly, collective salvation."⁷ The millennium is seen as imminent in that "the believers live in tense expectation and preparation for it."⁸ The millennium is seen as total

. . . in the sense that the new dispensation will bring about not mere improvement, but a complete transformation and perfection itself. The millennium will inaugurate cosmic harmony, social justice and peace. The believers will be liberated from all ills and limitations of human existence; they will

be redeemed from pain and transience, from fallibility and sin, and become at once perfectly good and perfectly happy.⁹

The millennium is this-wordly in that this state of perfection will be enjoyed by humans on earth and not in some heavenly state. The millennium is collective in that it is enjoyed by a group which is usually seen as consisting of the elect or the faithful, and excluding the unbelievers.¹⁰

By saying that the millennial salvation is ultimate, Talmon was making a statement similar to Cohn's assertion that the agency is seen as supernatural. Millenarians believe that the teleological process of history is leading to an irrevocable conclusion. This implies that there is some force, or divine will, which is guiding history to this preordained end.¹¹

For the purpose of the thesis of this book, the emphasis will be on superhuman agents which are not necessarily supernatural as Cohn's definition stipulated. Supernatural agency implies the operation of some entity or force outside natural law. By using the term superhuman, I seek to include agencies believed to operate within the realm of natural law as well as those agencies believed to operate independently of natural law. Superhuman as an inclusive term can refer to nonhuman agencies such as God, divine will, evolution, or even extraterrestrials,¹² or to suprahumans, human beings believed to possess powers far above those of the average human being.

Two of the four cases studied by Margrit Eichler illustrate a belief in a superhuman but not supernatural agency. These are the Spartakists in pre-World War Germany and Nazism. She identified these two

movements as millenarian because they shared "a teleological view of history, a belief that there is a fundamental purpose in history. This is a notion which presupposes the existence of some superhuman or supernatural will. . . ."13 The superhuman agent for the Spartakists was "the great historic law" which guaranteed the socialist victory despite the shortcomings of individuals and temporary setbacks.14 Nazism had its own messiah in the person of Hitler, whom the core members saw as being sacred and superhuman.15 So while the impelling agent in much pre-millenarian thought may indeed be supernatural, other kinds of superhuman agents may be seen as guiding the historical process.

It is generally recognized that pre-millenarianism is often associated with additional characteristics that are not included in the definitions given above. One such characteristic is the presence of ecstatic or frenzied behavior. According to Talmon

Most millenarian [pre-millenarian] movements are highly emotional. With the exception of the Christadelphians who discourage emotional release in any form and emphasize exegesis, exhortation and doctrine, almost all the other movements involve wild and very often frenzied emotional display. In many instances we encounter hysterical and paranoid phenomena--mass possession, trances, fantasies. The emotional tension manifests itself in motor phenomena such as twitching, shaking and convulsions which have swiftly spread through wide areas. Closely related to the high emotional tension is a strong antinomian tendency. Millenarian movements

deliberately break accepted taboos and overthrow hallowed norms. They engage in many ritualised forms of sin and sacrilege. Sexual aberrations in the form of either extreme ascetism or sexual excess are very common as well. There is often unbridled expression of aggression. Members of such movements have swept over the country, devastating, burning and massacring on their way. Sometimes aggression is turned inwards: the members destroy their own property and even commit mass suicide.¹⁶

This kind of behavior is typical of what Cohn called "revolutionary chiliasm"¹⁷ which arises when an agrarian or colonized people is oppressed unmercifully by landlords and imperialists, or when the traditional agrarian pattern of life and kinship relationships are severely disrupted by factors such as industrialization or contact with an alien culture. This happened in Europe during the Middle Ages, and has occurred in the last two centuries in undeveloped countries in reaction to imperialism. Stephen Fuchs described many such cases among aboriginal tribes in India in reaction to oppression from their Hindu and Muslim landlords and the British as well.¹⁸ Millenarianism among the American Indians is another example.

Another characteristic of most but not all pre-millenarian movements is messianism. "Redemption is brought about by a messiah who mediates between the divine and the human."¹⁹ Eichler, in her study of leadership in millenarian movements, applied the above definition to the word "prophet." She stated that mediation between the divine and the people was part of the definition of both a prophet and a charismatic

leader, "but the latter goes beyond this by requiring certain structural features, such as certain patterns of interaction between himself and secondary leaders."²⁰ These patterns of interaction include a totalitarian control over the lives of all the followers including the secondary leaders. This control includes the restructuring of family and marital relationships.²¹

. . . charismatic legitimation is a necessary, although not a sufficient, aspect of charismatic leadership. A leader is said to be charismatically legitimated if he claims and is believed by his followers to possess some extraordinary quality which is available only to him (such as being personally appointed by God for a certain office) and which is utilized to legitimate his leadership--in other words, a leader is charismatically legitimated if he claims and is believed to possess a monopoly of access to the legitimating source.²²

Therefore prophets of millenarian movements may not always be charismatic leaders, but charismatic leaders of millenarian movements are always prophets.²³

Those prophets or leaders who choose not to exercise totalitarian control over their followers and who do not claim to have sole access to the source of legitimation were termed "ideological leaders" by Eichler. In this case, the secondary leaders and other followers have access to the source of the ideology. In the case of the Millerites in the United States, Miller predicted that the millennium would begin in 1843-44. However anyone could study and interpret the Bible for himself and Miller was not the sole

authority. In the case of the Spartakists, anyone could interpret the Marxist literature.²⁴

Eichler pointed to Hitler and the leaders of the Münster Anabaptists as examples of charismatic leaders. Hitler was a charismatic leader not just because of the totalitarian controls that he imposed, but because he was believed by his closest followers to have been "selected by 'Nature' as executor of its plan of salvation for mankind. He was believed to have special insights that were personal and available only to him."²⁵ The three successive leaders of the Münster Anabaptists were charismatic leaders because of the totalitarian control that they exercised over the inhabitants of Münster and because they were believed to be appointed by God, one being called the "King of Zion."²⁶

Very often a millenarian movement may have two leaders, the "prophet" and the "organizer" as they were termed by Eichler. Talmon called these the "messiah" and the "leader." Often the prophet-messiah does not have organizational abilities so another person takes on this task. Or, quite often the organizer-leader acts as a John the Baptist, announcing the coming of the messiah.²⁷ These organizer-leaders organize their followers and prepare them for the coming of the prophet-messiah. They provide their followers with an ideology concerning the anticipated event and they develop an explanation if their hopes are disappointed.²⁸

So while pre-millenarianism is defined in this book as belief in a collective, terrestrial, and imminent salvation that will be total and accomplished by superhuman agents in a catastrophic manner, it is recognized that pre-millenarianism is often but not

necessarily associated with ecstatic and perhaps even violent behavior, and messianism. Post-millennialism is defined in this book as a view of history that sees the collective and terrestrial salvation as being accomplished gradually by the effort of human beings who are subject to the impelling force of some super-human agency. We will find that Annie Besant's millenarianism combined elements of pre-millenarianism and post-millennialism into a pattern of ultimate concern that I call progressive messianism. Progressive messianism entails a progressive and evolutionary view of history with the hope for a terrestrial salvation that will be accomplished imminently by a messiah who will enter the historical process to effect a radical but non-catastrophic change. This salvation is collective but not exclusivistic as in pre-millenarian movements. Thus progressive messianism combines an optimistic and evolutionary view of history with messianism, which has been previously associated with the pessimistic and catastrophic pre-millenarian view of history. It was necessary for humans to develop a belief in progress before progressive messianism could become a common pattern of ultimate concern.

Millenarianism and the Doctrine of Progress

Ernest Lee Tuveson, Theodore Olson, J. B. Bury, and others saw the doctrine of progress that was so common in eighteenth and nineteenth century western thought, and which is still very prevalent in the twentieth century, as developing out of the Christian millenarian tradition.²⁹ The pre-millenarian view of nature as being in a process of constant decline was predominant in the late middle ages and allowed little

scope for a belief in progress. Important scientific discoveries during the Renaissance prompted some thinkers to question the doctrine of decline in nature and humanity. At this time, thinkers such as Jean Bodin, Loys LeRoy, and George Hakewill adopted a cyclical view of gradual progress in human development. In the seventeenth century, the work of the French mathematician, Descartes, created an intellectual atmosphere conducive to the development of the idea of progress. His emphasis on the regularity of the laws of nature as opposed to belief in the decline in nature was increasingly seen as contradicting belief in a God who actively interfered in the workings of his creation as in the catastrophic denouement of the pre-millennarian vision. Millenarian thinkers increasingly saw God as bringing about the millennial condition through the gradual operation of natural laws rather than through catastrophic intervention. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as the optimistic post-millennial view became more widespread, and popular thought became more secularized and scientific, it became easy to transfer the teleological process from an active Providence to an inexorable progress operating through natural laws. The doctrine of progress was widely accepted in France and England primarily as the result of scientific achievements and discoveries. Millenarian thought was not eliminated by the widespread acceptance of the doctrine of progress. In the nineteenth century, belief in the doctrine of progress coexisted alongside all shades of pre-millennarian and post-millennial belief.

Olson, in his study of the origins of the doctrine of progress, pointed out that its advocates have seldom defined exactly what they mean. Olson defined the

doctrine of progress as proposing that "there is a blind force in history, a force uncontaminated by historical contingency, yet dedicated to the continued improvement of man."³⁰ As the above definition implies, there is an inherent contradiction present in the doctrine of progress which attributes beneficence to the operation of an automatic process³¹ which can easily shade into a belief in some sort of superhuman or divine plan. This book will follow Olson's definition of progress while emphasizing this contradiction which causes progressivism to shade easily into post-millennialism.

Other authors have also stressed the close connection between a belief in progress and post-millennialism. W. H. Oliver saw post-millennialism as a compromise between pre-millenarianism and a belief in progress (actually Tuveson and Olson argued that the doctrine of progress grew out of post-millennial thought). Oliver pointed out that the idea of progress "commonly acquires overtones of inevitability, and takes the form of a supra-human if not an avowedly divine strategy."³² J. F. C. Harrison also pointed out the close relationship between post-millennialism and social reform groups. For him such groups could be classified as secular millenarian groups since they have "shed virtually all association with traditional religious belief" and may even be strongly anti-Christian.³³ The main point is that post-millennialists and even believers in the doctrine of progress assume that the ideal human condition will be attained due to the agency of some superhuman force. Pre-millenarianism and progressive post-millennialism differ as to catastrophic or gradualist method but they are agreed on the necessity of a superhuman agent.

Progressive messianism pushes post-millennialism one step further in its expectation of, or belief in the presence of, a divine human being, a messiah, who will bring about the anticipated transformation of the human race and thereby the world.

Millenarianism and Progress in Nineteenth Century England

Millenarian thinking was extremely commonplace on all levels of English society in the early nineteenth century. The French Revolution had stimulated an interest in interpreting historical events in the light of Biblical prophecy, and interpretation of prophecy had become a normal activity. There were varying types of millenarianism and in the 1820's there was a major controversy between pre-millenarians and post-millennialists. Those who attempted to interpret the prophecies literally tended to be pre-millenarians and saw a radical discontinuity between the present world order and the future. The pre-millenarian view seemed rather heretical to most Anglicans of that time who had been taught post-millennialism. The post-millennialists took an allegorical view of prophecy and most Anglicans were influenced by the post-millennial views of the eighteenth-century rector, Daniel Whitby, who saw a steady success of the Church and improvement of humanity and society in history that would produce the arrival of the millennium.³⁴

W. H. Oliver wrote that it is highly probable that there occurred a relative decline in the prevalence of pre-millenarian thinking in the later nineteenth century, although it certainly has continued strongly into the twentieth century. This can be partly related

to the rise of modern biblical scholarship and its assault upon literal interpretation of the Bible. Additionally, there was a continued decline, which was partially traced above, in a belief in Providence or an intervening personal God. Even when a belief in God was retained, greater emphasis was placed on the operation of natural laws. Increasingly, there was a wide-spread post-millennialism which tended to shade off into the belief in progress.³⁵ Millenarianism began to take on various secular forms and appear in various combinations of pre-millenarianism and post-millennialism.

The life of Robert Owen (1771-1858) is an excellent example of millenarian belief independent of Christian content that became more common in the second half of the century. Owen was a deist and in later years a spiritualist. He was constantly declaring that the millennium or the New Moral World had arrived which he envisioned as a society free from crime, poverty, and misery, with an emphasis on "The Brotherhood of the Human Race." In addition to his many social projects and schemes, he felt that the mere fact of announcing the millennium would create it in reality. Usually he used post-millennial language, saying that the millennium was the most recent and highest stage in human development. Sometimes he implied a pre-millenarian point of view by speaking of a Second Advent and a sudden cataclysm. He saw himself as the agent of an outside force or superior Spirit, and felt that he alone had the power to inaugurate the millennial state. A number of Christian millenarians felt that it was appropriate for them to work for Owen and further his movement.³⁶

The London Exhibition of 1851 was a public celebration of the widespread belief in progress particularly as manifested in science and technology. The Exhibition was sponsored by Prince Albert who saw it as marking a point in the development of humanity from which new efforts can be made to further progress.³⁷

Publication of Darwin's Origin of Species in 1859, while creating a storm of controversy, gave a new impetus to a wide-spread faith in progress. The concept of biological evolution is neither inherently pessimistic or optimistic, and in the nineteenth century it was indeed interpreted in both ways.³⁸ Tennyson's In Memoriam saw evolution as relentless change but not progressive. He saw Nature as giving no thought to the individual or even to biological types. All were eventually discarded.³⁹ Darwin himself took the optimistic view, writing "as natural selection works solely by and for the good of each being, all corporeal and mental environments will tend to progress towards perfection."⁴⁰ Since no cataclysm had devastated the entire world in the past, Darwin looked forward to an unbroken progress in evolution. Many other people since Darwin, including Annie Besant, have assumed that evolution is automatically progressive.

Thus in the second half of the nineteenth century, the doctrine of progress became a widely accepted assumption in popular thought. The work of Herbert Spencer and James Stuart Mill did much to popularize the idea of progress.⁴¹ Spencer applied the principle of progressive evolution or "the law of progress" to sociology and ethics.⁴² Mill's System of Logic (1843) attempted to discover the law governing human progress.⁴³ Two widely read histories, Buckle's History

of Civilisation in England (Vol. I, 1857, and Vol. II, 1861) and J. W. Draper's History of the Intellectual Development of Europe (1864), served also to popularize the notion that humanity's development was progressive and that this process was subject to general laws.⁴⁴ By the 1870's and 1880's in Great Britain, the idea of progress had become "part of the general mental outlook of educated people."⁴⁵

Millenarianism and Progress in Annie Besant's Thought

The succeeding chapters will demonstrate that Annie Besant's various careers were motivated by a typically Victorian belief in progress and desire to ameliorate current social conditions. This constant goal would eventually lead her to develop a pattern of ultimate concern that would take the form of progressive messianism, combining pre-millenarian and post-millennial elements. A belief in progress does not necessarily have to result in millenarian belief, but it has been demonstrated that these ideas are closely related. Besant's personal belief in progress caused her to be very disturbed by the social conditions that she saw around her which indicated a distinct lack of progress. Nevertheless, retaining her belief in progress, she set herself to work to improve those social conditions. At first, she felt that the answer to social problems lay in human effort for social reform. Gradually, she came to rely on superhuman agents to accomplish a collective salvation that would result not merely in social reform but in a change in human nature. Besant moved firmly into a millenarian pattern of belief which culminated in her expectation

of the imminent appearance of a messiah, the World-Teacher. Besant's progressive messianism consisted of the pre-millenarian expectation of an imminent, collective, terrestrial, and total salvation that would be accomplished by superhuman agents which included a messiah. Besant's progressive messianism also included a post-millennial view of history. Her belief in progressive evolution was too strong to allow her to believe that this salvation, although imminent, would happen catastrophically.

The chapter on Annie Besant's early thought will describe the elements in her atheistic and socialistic thought which would eventually lead to her adoption of Theosophy and subsequent creation of a progressive messianic movement. I will show how Besant's belief in progress contained elements that were typical of popular nineteenth century notions of progress, and describe the social conditions that so many Victorian believers in progress found disturbing. The subsequent chapters dealing with Besant's thought after becoming a Theosophist will indicate that her goal for the world, i.e., the actualization of brotherhood, remained unchanged from her earlier careers as atheist and socialist. The attainment of true brotherhood in the world was the millennial goal for which she worked most of her adult life and this work culminated in her assumption of the role of organizer-leader in creating a progressive messianic movement, the Order of the Star in the East.

Notes

¹Sylvia L. Thrupp, ed., Millennial Dreams in Action: Essays in Comparative Study, Comparative Studies in Society and History, Supplement II (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1962), p. 12.

²Peter Toon, ed., Puritans, the Millennium and the Future of Israel: Puritan Eschatology 1600 to 1660 (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., Ltd., 1970), p. 17.

³Ibid.

⁴Encyclopedic Dictionary of Religion, 1979 ed., s.v. Post-millenarianism (Postmillennialism).

⁵W. H. Oliver, Prophets and Millennialists: The Uses of Biblical Prophecy in England from the 1790s to the 1840s (N.p.: Auckland University Press, 1978), pp. 20-23; J. F. C. Harrison, The Second Coming: Popular Millenarianism 1780-1850 (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University, 1979), p. 7.

⁶Norman Cohn, "Medieval Millenarianism: Its Bearing on the Comparative Study of Millenarian Movements," in Millennial Dreams in Action, ed. Sylvia L. Thrupp (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1962), p. 31.

⁷Yonina Talmon, "Millenarian Movements," Archives Européennes de Sociologie 7 (1966): 159.

⁸Ibid., p. 167.

⁹Ibid., p. 166.

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 167-68.

¹¹Ibid., p. 166.

¹²Leon Festinger, Henry W. Riecker, Stanley Schachter made a sociological study of a millenarian group in the United States and its members' reactions after the predicted catastrophic destruction of the earth's surface failed to materialize in When Prophecy Fails (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1956). Superhuman agents figured in this group's ideology in their conviction that they were in communication with Jesus and the Creator, and that extraterrestrials in their flying saucers would pick up a

remnant of humanity to be saved from the general destruction.

¹³Margrit Eichler, "Charismatic and Ideological Leadership in Secular and Religious Millenarian Movements: A Sociological Study" (Ph.D. diss., Duke University, 1971), p. 61.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 53.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 59.

¹⁶Yonina Talmon, "Pursuit of the Millennium: The Relation Between Religious and Social Change," Archives Européennes de Sociologie 3 (1962): 136.

¹⁷Norman Cohn, The Pursuit of the Millennium (London: Secker & Warburg, 1957), pp. 22-24, 31-32.

¹⁸Stephen Fuchs, Rebellious Prophets: A Study of Messianic Movements in Indian Religions (New York: Asia Publishing House, 1965).

¹⁹Talmon, "Pursuit of the Millennium," p. 133.

²⁰Eichler, pp. 77-78.

²¹Ibid., pp. 114, 212.

²²Ibid., p. 79.

²³Ibid., p. 77.

²⁴Ibid., pp. 83-85.

²⁵Ibid., p. 84.

²⁶Ibid., pp. 79-82.

²⁷Ibid., p. 77; Talmon, "Pursuit of the Millennium," p. 133.

²⁸Talmon, "Pursuit of the Millennium," pp. 133-34.

²⁹J. B. Bury, The Idea of Progress: An Inquiry into Its Origin and Growth (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1921); Ernest Lee Tuveson, Millennium and Utopia: A Study in the Background of the Idea of Progress (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1949); Theodore Olson, Millennialism, utopianism, and

progress (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982). Bury did not specifically relate the doctrine of progress to millenarianism, but in tracing the growth of the doctrine of progress he made a careful examination of Christian millenarian thought. Olson additionally and less convincingly related the doctrine of progress to utopianism which he identified with a literary genre that had very few representatives during the formative phases of the doctrine of progress. This genre was initiated by Plato's Republic although this work is not completely utopian since Plato did not believe his ideal society could be actualized in the world. Other works in this genre include More's Utopia and Campanella's City of the Sun.

Despite strong similarities between Besant's Theosophical thought and Olson's definition of utopianism, it will be seen that Besant's thought was millenarian and not utopian. Olson defined utopianism as

the search for the good pattern of life in an ahistorical cosmos . . . utopianism is committed to the notion of a cosmos in which historical development fundamentally adds nothing. Pattern, cycle, and hierarchy (of values, if not of social structures and roles) are the prime realities. The best way to live may thus be discovered; it is "there" already; it could have been discovered at any prior time (143).

Utopia then is the result of a human penetration of the plane of eternal truth. This plane is the fundamental reality of the closed cosmos (i.e. the totality of all that is) in which we live on the plane of temporal, mutable existence. This latter plane is in some fashion derived from the plane of more fundamental reality. We can penetrate to this reality and participate in it because we share in both planes; our essential nature transcends the merely temporal, mutable, and material (144-45).

Theosophy postulates a universe divided into a hierarchy of planes, the lower and more material ones deriving from the higher planes consisting of subtler matter. All planes are manifestations of the one spiritual reality. Human intuition that is properly developed can directly perceive the higher realms and the unity underlying all. Although any individual can train his faculties to make this leap into the higher

realms, for Annie Besant the achievement of the perfect way of life on earth was definitely a historical process. Rather than an ahistorical cosmos, she saw the cosmos as evolving in history according to a master plan. The achievement of her goal of brotherhood in the world would be accomplished by the evolution of a new human type.

³⁰Olson, p. 9

³¹Ibid., p. 239.

³²Oliver, p. 23.

³³Harrison, The Second Coming, p. 10.

³⁴Oliver, pp. 13-14, 17-18, 83; Ernest R. Sandeen, The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism 1800-1930 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970), pp. xv, 5-7, 12, 40.

³⁵Oliver, pp. 239-40.

³⁶Ibid., pp. 177-91, 194-96; J. F. C. Harrison, Quest for the New Moral World: Robert Owen and the Owenites in Britain and America (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1969), pp. 92-93, 124-26, 133-35, 255.

³⁷Bury, pp. 329-30.

³⁸Ibid., pp. 335-36.

³⁹E. L. Woodward, "1851 and the Visibility of Progress," in Ideas and Beliefs of the Victorians, ed. British Broadcasting Corporation (London: Sylvan Press, 1949), p. 54; Walter E. Houghton, The Victorian Frame of Mind 1830-1870 (London: Oxford University Press, 1957), p. 69.

⁴⁰As quoted in Bury, p. 336; Houghton, pp. 37-38.

⁴¹Bury, pp. 307-41.

⁴²Ibid., p. 336; Frederick Copleston, "Herbert Spencer--Progress and Freedom," in Ideas and Beliefs of the Victorians, ed. British Broadcasting Corporation (London: Sylvan Press, 1949), p. 87.

⁴³Bury, pp. 307-9.

⁴⁴Ibid., pp. 309-12.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 346.

CHAPTER III

Biography of Annie Besant

Christian Girlhood--A Growing
Concern with Suffering

Annie Wood (Besant) was born October 1, 1847, in London of parents who were of predominately Irish descent. Her father, William Burton Persse Wood had a medical degree. Her mother was Emily Roche Morris. Annie was the second of three children. Her older brother was Henry Wood, and she had a younger brother, Alfred.

Mr. Wood, although raised in a Roman Catholic family, was a sceptic and a student of philosophy. Mrs. Wood was very religious and a member of the Church of England, although according to Besant she came to give up belief in "eternal punishment, the vicarious atonement of Christ, the doctrine that faith is necessary to salvation, the equality of Christ with God, [and] the infallibility of the Bible."¹ These were the same doctrines Besant later came to question as she moved toward atheism. Besant reported that morality was her mother's gauge of a Christian and not the orthodoxy of views. Her mother was fond of the Anglican Broad Church men, especially Dean Stanley of Westminster Abbey.²

Mr. Wood died of consumption in October of 1852. Albert Wood who was three years younger than Annie died the following March. Mrs. Wood, who did not attend her husband's funeral, gave indications of following the events of the service and burial by clairvoyant means. Later she was able to locate her husband's grave before the identifying headstone was placed there. Annie thought this was a rather unusual episode, but later discovered that Theosophical doctrines could explain

this to her satisfaction.³ Eventually Annie would discover that she too possessed psychic abilities.

Mrs. Wood moved her family to Harrow in order that her son could attend school there. She ran a boarding house for the school boys. Upon graduating from Harrow, Henry attended Cambridge. In 1855 Annie was taken in and educated by a maiden lady, Miss Ellen Marryat. Miss Marryat took in a number of young students, and she taught them the importance of independent study and research.

As a girl, Annie's outlook was very much influenced by Miss Marryat's Evangelicalism. Annie regretted that Christians no longer did battle against evil in a heroic manner as in Pilgrim's Progress. Annie loved the great struggle depicted in Milton's Paradise Lost. She enjoyed her studies of the Bible and the Prayer Book and thus won Miss Marryat's praise. Annie was confirmed in an Anglican church while visiting Paris.⁴

According to Besant, Miss Marryat set an example concerning the importance of service to the unfortunate. Miss Marryat visited the poor and sent them food from her own table. She started a Sunday School for poor children in which Annie taught. Annie and Miss Marryat's other students gave up the use of sugar so that they could save money to give away. Even Miss Marryat's habit of taking in children to educate was a conscious service to parents of meager means. Thus Miss Marryat was probably Besant's earliest teacher concerning the importance of service and the desire to ameliorate the conditions of the poor.⁵

At sixteen and a half Annie left Miss Marryat's care, but continued her studies. She studied German and piano with the appropriate tutors, and she studied

Plato and Socrates on her own. She read Derby's translation of the Iliad, and Dante.⁶ Her interest in religion continued and she made an intensive study of the Church fathers at this time, including the Shepherd of Hermas, Polycarp, Barnabas, Ignatius, Clement, Chrysostom, and Augustine. In the Church of England she was attracted to the Tractarians, Pusey, Liddon, and Keble. She fasted, meditated, and tried self-flagellation.⁷ She was not allowed to read romantic novels, and looking back on this period of her life she felt that her passions found outlet in her prayers to Christ. She idealized clergymen as being closest to God.⁸

Annie's faith was shaken slightly when she attempted to make a harmony of the gospels and she found that they did not agree with one another. She managed to put this out of her mind for awhile, but she would remember it later.⁹

Annie spent some time with the family of a lawyer, William Roberts of Manchester. Roberts, who was her "first tutor in radicalism,"¹⁰ was involved with the defense of a band of Irish insurgents in Manchester. These men were being tried for the accidental murder of a policeman while they were rescuing two Fenian leaders. As the lock of a police van was shot open, the policeman in question had his eye to the keyhole. Annie observed the trial and saw how the decision against the men was made prior to the conclusion of the trial. Three men were executed, including a seventeen year old boy. This was a very exciting episode and it awoke in Annie a love of liberty and a sympathy for the common people.¹¹

Besant felt that Roberts who was known as "the poor man's lawyer" awakened her awareness of the hard

lot of working people and the necessity of amelioration. He described to her the brutal conditions in which women and children worked in the mines. Previously Annie had adopted the view akin to that of Miss Marryat that the poor were to be charitably but paternalistically treated. Besant reported that Roberts was the first person to point out to her that workers were responsible for the production of the nation's wealth and thus had the right to live and work in appropriate conditions.¹²

Annie came to know the young Rev. Frank Besant on a family vacation at the beach. When he proposed, she was caught totally off guard and said nothing. Later, after she accepted, she changed her mind, but her mother would not allow her to renege on her promise. Therefore she was married in 1867 at the age of twenty. She felt that the marriage might suit her in spite of her doubts because she would be able to serve the poor in her husband's parish. Her wedding night was a rude shock to her since she was completely ignorant of the sexual facts of life. The marriage was rocky from the start in other ways as well since Frank believed in the complete authority of the husband over the wife. Annie on the other hand was bored with housework and wanted to spend her time reading and studying. In addition, she could not tend the poor because initially Frank did not have a parish but made his living by teaching.

On January 16, 1869, Annie's son, Arthur Digby Besant, was born, and on August 28, 1870, her daughter, Mabel, was born. In 1871 both children came down with whooping cough. Digby recovered, but Mabel developed severe complications and it was thought that she would die. While nursing her children through this severe illness and feeling terribly unhappy about her mar-

riage, Annie came to question why a supposedly loving and omnipotent God would cause such suffering in an innocent child. She remembered the doubts raised by her harmony of the Gospels. Annie resolved never to accept any Christian dogma without thoroughly inquiring into it and testing it.¹³

The dogmas she set out to examine initially were:

- I. The eternity of punishment after death.
- II. The meaning of "goodness" and "love" as applied to a God who had made this world with all its evil and its misery.
- III. The nature of the atonement of Christ, and the "justice" of God in accepting a vicarious suffering from Christ, and a vicarious righteousness from the sinner.
- IV. The meaning of "inspiration" as applied to the Bible, and the reconciliation of the perfection of the author with the blunders and the immoralities of the work.¹⁴

Annie studied the writings of F. D. Maurice, the sermons of Robertson of Brighton, and the writings of Stopford Brooke, but she found that these did not rebuild her faith. Dean Mansel's arguments in his Bampton lectures on "The Limits of Religious Thought" only increased her doubts. She felt that the Broad Church men like Maurice and Stanley evaded the issue on eternal punishment by equivocating on the meaning of the word "eternal." Her reading of W. R. Greg's "Creed of Christendom" and Matthew Arnold's "Literature of Dogma" made her return to Christianity even more impossible.¹⁵

Worst of all the puzzles, perhaps, was that of the existence of evil and misery, and the racking doubt whether God could be good,

and yet look on the evil and the misery of the world unmoved and untouched. It seemed so impossible to believe that a Creator could be either cruel enough to be indifferent to the misery, or weak enough to be unable to stop it: the old dilemma faced me unceasingly. 'If he can prevent it, and does not, he is not good; if he wishes to prevent it, and cannot, he is not almighty;' and out of this I could find no way of escape. Not yet had any doubt of the existence of God crossed my mind.¹⁶

During this time, at Annie's request, her cousin, Lord Hatherly, offered Frank a choice of clerical appointments. He chose the vicarage in Sibsey, but never forgave his wife for obtaining the living for him. While at Sibsey, Annie became aware of the conditions of the farm laborers. The farmers were tenants who paid high rents to their aristocratic landlords, and they paid very low wages to their laborers. There was some agitation for unionization of the laborers, but of course the farmers were against it and refused to hire any man known to have attended a union meeting. Annie encountered one such case where the husband was out of work and so had taken to drink. She found his wife in their one-room cottage sick in bed, with a sick child and a dead child in bed with her. Annie also cited the example of another small cottage that housed a great-grandfather and his wife, an unmarried grandmother, an unmarried mother and her child, and three male lodgers as a typical situation.¹⁷ Exposure to people living in these conditions increased Besant's questioning concerning the meaning of suffering and the nature of a supposedly benevolent God

who allowed suffering to exist. After she began lecturing to and working for working people, Besant looked back on this time as awakening her concern to ameliorate current social conditions.

Theism--Struggle for Independence

While living at Sibsey, a certain amount of domestic violence ensued so Annie went to visit her mother in London. There in 1872 she came into contact with the Rev. Charles Voysey, who had been tried for heresy in 1869 and expelled from the Church of England. In 1871 he had resumed preaching in St. George's Hall in St. John's Wood, London, to a congregation known as the Theistic Church. Annie was relieved to discover that here was a man who had given up belief in the authority of the Bible, original sin, eternal punishment, and the atonement, while still believing in God.¹⁸ Annie came to be a personal friend of the Voysey family and continued her reading under his guidance. She read Theodore Parker's "Discourse on Religion," Francis Newman's "Hebrew Monarchy," and the essays of Miss Francis Power Cobbe. Finally she gave up belief in the deity of Jesus Christ.¹⁹

When she came to reject the doctrine of the divinity of Christ she realized that she was in an impossible situation for a clergyman's wife. She wrote to Dr. Pusey as a last resort since she had been greatly influenced by his writings when she had been attracted to the Roman Catholic Church. He advised her to read the Bampton lectures of his own disciple, Liddon, but she did not find these convincing. He also advised her to study passages in the Fourth Gospel, but

through her own studies she had concluded that this gospel was spurious. Finally, he invited her to visit, and so she went to see him at Oxford. She found that he avoided discussing her intellectual difficulties and urged her to pray and have faith, and to stop her studying since "you have read too much already." As a result of this unsatisfactory meeting, Annie embarked on a path that would lead to her separation from her husband.²⁰

In London Annie became acquainted with the family of Thomas Scott who brought her into contact with a wide circle of Freethinkers. He made it his business to publish heretical pamphlets which he distributed free of charge to any interested person. Annie wrote her first pamphlet for him entitled "On the Deity of Jesus of Nazareth."²¹

As a consequence of her new convictions, Annie refused to take communion, which was bound to cause comment in her husband's church. She wrote another pamphlet for Scott called "According to St. John On the Deity of Jesus of Nazareth. Part II. A Comparison between the Fourth Gospel and the Three Synoptics."²²

In 1873 Annie, while in her husband's empty church, discovered that she had a talent for making speeches. Although she lacked an audience at this first attempt,²³ she was soon to use this talent before large audiences and was often cited as the best female speaker of her time.

A relative of Mr. Besant had been urging that it was most unseemly of a wife of a clergyman to be writing anti-Christian pamphlets, even though they had been published anonymously. Also, a woman in her position should be taking the sacrament in her husband's church. While on vacation with her mother,

Annie was given the ultimatum that she should either resume taking communion or that she should not return home. Annie chose the latter, and a deed of separation was drawn up giving her custody of her daughter Mabel.²⁴

Annie's mother died shortly after the separation. Her last wish was that Annie take a final communion with her. Annie got Dean Stanley of Westminster to administer the communion to both of them in spite of her new opinions. On her deathbed Mrs. Wood said, "My little one, you have never made me sad or sorry except for your own sake; you have always been too religious." . . . Yes, it has been darling Annie's only fault; she has always been too religious."²⁵

Annie was impoverished during this time since she received only a small allowance from her husband. The Scott family helped Annie by providing her with some meals. She undertook to write more pamphlets for Mr. Scott in order to earn some money. She wrote pamphlets "On the Atonement," "On Eternal Torture," "On the Mediation and Salvation of Ecclesiastical Christianity," and "On Inspiration." She also wrote "On the Religious Education of Children," and "Natural Religion vs. Revealed Religion." Having given up belief in the deity of Jesus Christ, the atonement, and the special inspiration of the Bible, Annie identified herself as a theist, believing in a Creator God who operated in the universe through natural law. She concluded that God revealed himself to humanity through the workings of natural law and that God had directly inspired the moral instruction given by the great teachers of all faiths.²⁶

Annie became friends with Moncure Conway, an American who was preaching at South Place Chapel in

Finsbury. South Place had a reputation as being a center for liberal thought, and Conway had made it into a forum for all ranges of radical and Freethinking opinion. She found that discussions with Conway widened her views on the question of the existence of God. She reread Mill's Examination of Sir W. Hamilton's Philosophy and studied carefully Auguste Comte's Philosophie Positive. Upon rereading Dean Mansel's Bampton lectures, she found that she was pushed more and more to unbelief. Mansel's argument that the Infinite could not be an object of consciousness would eventually bring her to atheism. In order to help herself resolve these difficulties, she undertook to write a pamphlet for Scott entitled "On the Nature and Existence of God," in which she quoted extensively from Mansel's lecture.²⁷

Atheism--A Sense of Mission

Besant first read Charles Bradlaugh's newspaper, The National Reformer, on July 19, 1874. She found the principles and activities of Bradlaugh's National Secular Society, which pertained to the amelioration of social conditions, attractive, but at that time she did not identify herself as an atheist. She wrote Bradlaugh and asked if she had to be an atheist in order to join the National Secular Society. He replied in his newspaper that it was only necessary to accept the principles of the society, although "Candidly, we can see no logical resting-place between the entire acceptance of authority, as in the Roman Catholic Church, and the most extreme Rationalism."²⁸

Besant applied for membership and went to one of Bradlaugh's lectures in order to receive her certifi-

cate of membership. Having received her certificate from his hands, they agreed to meet in order to discuss atheism. After he had read her "On the Nature and Existence of God" he informed her that she had argued herself into an atheistical position and had not realized it. He offered her a job as a staff reporter on The National Reformer.²⁹

Bradlaugh was forty and Besant was twenty-six when they met, and they would have married if they had been free to do so. However, Besant was still married to Frank and Bradlaugh had separated from his wife who was an alcoholic. During their many travels and adventures together, Bradlaugh's two daughters, Hypatia and Alice, were always present as chaperones. Besant remained close friends with Bradlaugh until his death although the love interest gradually died out.

Bradlaugh came from a poor family and grew up in the East End section of London. As a teenager he was summarily dismissed from his position as a Sunday School teacher for having expressed some doubts to his minister that had arisen during his study of the 39 Articles and the Gospels. He began to attend open air lectures at Bonner's Fields where he was exposed to Freethought. He engaged in a debate with a Freethinker on the "Inspiration of the Bible" and was defeated. He again approached his minister with his questions and the minister in consultation with Bradlaugh's father and employers gave him the choice of changing his opinions or losing his job. Consequently, young Charles left home at age sixteen. After serving in the army for three years, he worked as a law clerk and taught himself law. Thus he was able to defend himself in the many court cases in which he would be involved. He began speaking to Freethought audiences, which led

to his becoming a major leader in Freethought circles through his newspaper, The National Reformer (founded 1860), and the National Secular Society (founded 1866) of which he was president. He was noted for speaking out in behalf of poor, working people. He was largely a self-taught man and was a voracious reader. His studies included the French, Hebrew, Greek, and Arabic languages.³⁰

In 1880 Bradlaugh was elected to the House of Commons by the Northampton constituency, and was prevented for six years from taking his seat due to his atheism. He was neither allowed to affirm nor to swear on the Bible. On one occasion when Bradlaugh was forcibly removed from the House of Commons, Besant single-handedly prevented a crowd from rushing in to his aid.³¹

As an atheist, Besant believed that it was important to work to improve this world as opposed to focusing on a life in the hereafter. Atheism provided Besant with a rationale for the kind of work toward which she had been tending, that of trying to alleviate suffering and to ameliorate current social conditions. Thus Besant's atheism was marked by a strong sense of mission and much practical work. After joining the National Secular Society, Besant was quickly elected one of its vice-presidents. Besant undertook a round of lectures in England and Scotland to working people and was often greeted with stone throwing and riots. She lectured against the Bible and criticized Christianity as impeding rational thought. Besant adopted Bradlaugh's views on measures he felt were necessary to improve the quality of life of laborers, including nationalization of farmland and the institu-

tion of a republic in Great Britian. She wrote and lectured in favor of women's rights and trade unions.³²

Charles Watts was a publisher and printer of Freethought material, including The National Reformer. In 1877 it was discovered by the authorities that he had been publishing a book on contraception called The Fruits of Philosophy. It was written by an American, Dr. Charles Knowlton, and was originally published in 1832. The authorities considered this book to be pornographic and were taking steps to prosecute Watts. Watts had not previously read the book himself, but when he did he decided that it was not worth his imprisonment. Besant decided the book was worthy of publication and urged Bradlaugh that they should publish it as a test case.³³ She felt that the freedom to publish information on contraception was an important issue, since knowledge of how to limit the size of one's family was an important way to alleviate the burden of working people, particularly of women.³⁴

Bradlaugh removed all of his printing business from Watts' shop since he had proved too cowardly in this matter, and he and Besant formed the Freethought Publishing Company. Besant replaced Watts as subeditor of The National Reformer.³⁵ They printed the Knowlton pamphlet themselves and informed the police of the date and location where they personally would sell it.

In due time they were arrested and brought up for trial. At the trial Besant and Bradlaugh presented their own cases and it was acknowledged that they both performed brilliantly. The jury decided "We are unanimously of the opinion that the book in question is calculated to deprave public morals, but at the same time we entirely exonerate the defendants from any corrupt motive in publishing it." The judge who had

been favorably disposed toward the defendants was confused by this verdict and surprisingly interpreted it as meaning "Guilty." Later when it was time for sentencing, the judge tried to persuade the couple to stop selling the book in return for their freedom. They refused and he angrily sentenced them to six months' imprisonment and fees of £1,400. However, he released them on their own recognizance of £100 each. The decision was later reversed on a technicality.³⁶

When all the copies of the Knowlton pamphlet had been sold (185,000 were printed), Bradlaugh and Besant decided not to reprint it since they felt the physiology was out of date. Besant had written her own guide to contraception entitled The Law of Population. Over 90,000 copies of this pamphlet were sold, and 110,000 copies of an American reprint were sold. In addition, it was translated into Swedish, Danish, Dutch, French, German, and Italian. This pamphlet was never prosecuted. Besant assisted in forming the Malthusian League in order to promote discussion of the "population question."³⁷

Besant was the first woman to publically advocate birth control.

As a result of her efforts, in the following year Dr. Aletta Jacobs opened the world's first birthcontrol clinic in Holland. Both the birth and death rates soon began to decline in England.³⁸

However, Besant had to suffer grievously for her advocacy. During the highly publicized trial she was subjected to the coarsest insults concerning her character and her relationship with Bradlaugh, although there was never any evidence of any impropriety with Bradlaugh or any of her subsequent love interests. Her

husband took action to have the custody of little Mabel taken away from her. This was done on the grounds of her atheistic and contraceptive propaganda and failure to provide Mabel with a religious education. The case was heard by Master of the Rolls, Sir George Jessel, who was prejudiced against her from the start. Not only did he disapprove of her religious and social views, but he thought it was most unseemly that she should be pleading her own case. Sir Jessel advised Besant to file for divorce, but later ruled that the original deed of separation prevented a suit for divorce.³⁹

Mabel was duly given into the care of her father. Her mother was given visitation rights, but since it proved too upsetting for Mabel, and too difficult to fight against the chaperones provided by Frank Besant, Besant resolved not to see her children until they were old enough to judge the situation for themselves.⁴⁰ Digby went to his mother when he was twenty-one and Mabel followed suit although she was not yet twenty. From that time Frank refused to have contact with the children. Besant was a prominent Theosophist at the time so both Digby and Mabel joined the Theosophical Society.

There were significant social results from Besant's custody battle.

Never again would the government take a child from a parent under similar circumstances, for it came to realize that giving a father absolute rights over children meant essentially, as Mrs. Besant put it, 'If you are legally your husband's wife, you can have no legal claim to your children; if legally you are your husband's mistress, your rights as

mother are secure.' The public, moreover, had been reminded of the heresy and blasphemy laws and would eventually modify them. And as an obvious aftermath to Mrs. Besant's skillful and spectacular performances as a laywoman lawyer before the highest courts and judges in the land, the Dialectical Society made her a member of a special committee to propose a new codification of the criminal law. At the same time the Association To Promote Women's Knowledge of the Law prepared a report on the abilities and disabilities of women in the practice of the law in any of its branches and pointed out that so far no woman had ever applied for admission as a student to any of the Inns of Court. It was a deficiency which within a few years was to be remedied with considerable success.⁴¹

Thus Besant was able to convert even this personal loss into an effort for social reform. The sense of mission that marked Besant's work as an atheist would continue throughout her life and lead to greater efforts to benefit humanity.

Interest in Science

In February of 1879 Besant enrolled in the London University in order to take a Bachelor of Science degree. She won honors in her exams but she was prevented from taking her degree. She reported that she was failed three times in chemistry because of the examiner's prejudice against her atheism and her activities in regard to contraception.⁴² However,

these studies marked an interest in science that was to remain with her the rest of her life.

While a student, she was tutored by the young and disreputable Dr. Edward Aveling. The pair fell in love and apparently by this time Bradlaugh did not mind because he remained close friends with Besant and grew fond of Aveling. Eventually Aveling would move away from Besant and form a liason with Eleanor Marx, the youngest daughter of Karl Marx. But while the romance with Besant was at its height, the pair began teaching science classes at the Hall of Science, which functioned as a meeting place for the Freethinkers. These clases helped students prepare for exams at the South Kensington branch of the University of London. Besant continued teaching the classes for nine years, long after the romance with Aveling had died out.⁴³

Growing Interest in Religion and Initial Contacts with the Theosophical Society

In January 1883 Besant started a magazine called Our Corner which contained various departments designed to appeal to a diversity of people. It contained essays on philosophy, science, politics, and art, fiction, serial novels, short stories, travelogues, poetry, puzzles, as well as columns on various topics such as gardening and chess. The magazine ran for six years. The pages of this magazine give evidence of Besant's growing interest in religions. Besant told the story of the descent of the Ganges in a form suitable for children, and she also presented "A Greek Legend," "A Christian Legend," "A Jewish Legend," and another "Hindu Legend" for her younger readers. J. M.

Wheeler wrote an article on Edwin Arnold's translation of the Bhagavad Gītā in which he mentioned Theosophy as an important instance of eastern philosophy being assimilated to western thought. This article referred to C. W. Leadbeater, Besant's future colleague, by name. Professor Ludwig Büchner's article on "The Origin and Progress of Religion" included a description of the religions of India.⁴⁴ Articles in Our Corner also indicate an interest in Spiritualism and related topics such as mesmerism. Initially Besant's attitude was ambivalent, sometimes criticizing and sometimes accepting.

During Besant's association with The National Reformer it showed an interest in Indian religions. Max Müller's first Hibbert lecture in 1878 was reported and commented on.⁴⁵ In 1879 Besant reviewed Edwin Arnold's The Light of Asia. Besant found that according to Arnold the Buddha struggled with the same issue that initiated her own theological questioning.

How can it be that Brahm
Would make a world and keep it miserable,
Since if, all-powerful, he leaves it so
He is not good, and if not powerful
He is not God.⁴⁶

In later years unsigned reviews appeared of such books as The Philosophy of the Upanishads and Ancient Indian Metaphysics, and Manual of Hindu Pantheism. In 1886 Besant's serial article entitled "Christianity Before Christ" purported to show that Christianity was completely unoriginal and drew on prior religious doctrines and mythologies, but demonstrated a strong interest in the comparative study of religions.⁴⁷

Indian Freethinkers were beginning to become Spiritualists and some were even joining the Theosoph-

ical Society. Bradlaugh and Besant disapproved of this trend and warned against it. There was a dialogue and an exchange of literature between the National Secular Society and the Theosophical Society. "A Theosophist" wrote to The National Reformer stating that the Theosophical Society was a Freethought organization and thus desired to associate with the National Secular Society and stressing the Theosophical Society's emphasis on universal brotherhood. Bradlaugh issued a statement saying that although the leaders of the Theosophical Society professed friendship with the National Secular Society, this was contradictory to their aims which he understood to be the attempt to stop the spread of materialism, atheism, and science.⁴⁸

The book entitled the Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett from the Mahatmas M. and K. H. was not published until 1923, however, two of the letters referred to Besant prior to her conversion to Theosophy and one to Bradlaugh. Sinnett probably received the one letter in 1883 or 1884 which he was directed to show to Besant. It referred to Sinnett's desire to use science to support the findings of the Theosophical Society and he was told that Besant was already working on these lines.⁴⁹

Meanwhile use every effort to develop such relations with A. Besant that your work may run on parallel lines and in full sympathy; an easier request than some of mine with which you have ever loyally complied. You may, if you see fit--show this note to her only.⁵⁰

Besant saw the letter but she was not ready to be swayed by the Theosophists, yet.

Socialism--Greater Effort for
Social Reform

Besant had been exposed to socialist literature for some time. Bradlaugh was too individualistic to be in favor of socialism but he allowed articles and letters discussing socialism to be published in The National Reformer. When Bradlaugh debated Hyndman of the Social Democratic Federation, it brought the issue of socialism even more to the attention of the members of the secular societies. As a result many of the secularists also joined socialist organizations.⁵¹ Besant reported that as a result of this debate, she, too, began to look seriously at socialism.⁵²

Besant was opposed to violence as a means of socialist reform, preferring to resort to constitutional methods in accordance with her training with Bradlaugh. She lectured on "Social Reform, Not Socialism, the Need of the Times." She advocated "cumulative taxation on rent and capital and the fixing of an eight-hour working day, especially for children, with five hours on Saturday."⁵³ However, she was being drawn inexorably into the socialist camp, finding in socialism the means by which to accomplish the desired amelioration of current social conditions. She finally joined the Fabian Society in 1885 since its members were less hostile to Bradlaugh than those of other English socialist organizations, and they advocated gradual reform. This move greatly disappointed Bradlaugh. However, they remained friends, and she kept her post as a vice-president of the National Secular Society, and she continued speaking on Freethought subjects. Her column in The National

Reformer began to contain announcements concerning the Fabian Society. Her greatest efforts were now directed toward the Fabian Society and she travelled the countryside lecturing on its behalf and enlisting new members.

When Besant joined the Fabian Society, it consisted of forty members and was not very active. Besant was the first person to join with a public reputation. She was elected to its executive committee in 1886 and 1888. She was continually trying to get the Fabians to take part in practical politics, and it was her idea to form local societies, although membership in the parent society in London continued to be carefully screened. She organized a conference at South Place Chapel bringing together representatives of socialist, radical, and secularist organizations. She organized another meeting of London socialists to discuss the forming of a socialist political party.⁵⁴

One of the members of the Fabian Society was the young George Bernard Shaw. For some time he had been contributing articles and stories to Our Corner. Besant made him the magazine's art critic and thus gave him his first paying job. A romance blossomed between the two, although Shaw was not devoting himself only to Besant.

Bradlaugh, who by now had gained his seat in the House of Commons, remained adamant against socialism although most of his outstanding followers had become socialists. Bradlaugh described the English socialists as consisting of a few poets, a few idiots, and some for whom he could not use such kindly words. This was hardly flattering to Besant, although they remained fast friends. Because of their differences in philo-

sophy Besant resigned as co-editor of The National Reformer.⁵⁵

There was a depression in England at this time and many people were out of work. The Social Democratic Federation, which was wooing Besant, organized the workers into mass demonstrations and the right of free speech became an issue when the government tried to prohibit these meetings. The government closed Trafalgar Square to public gatherings, and Besant participated with the radical and socialist groups who proposed to meet there anyway. This episode came to be known as Bloody Sunday in Trafalgar Square. Bloody Sunday did not result in too many injuries, although two men were killed in a subsequent Trafalgar Square gathering.⁵⁶

Besant and W. T. Stead formed the Law and Liberty League to post bail for those arrested for meeting illegally in Trafalgar Square and to provide legal assistance for them. They created the magazine, the Link, to communicate between the L.L.L. groups. The Link's subtitle was "A Journal for the Servants of Man" and its editors were working for "the Temporal Salvation of the World" or "the Secular Salvation of the People." They saw their organization as "a New Church dedicated to the Service of Man,"⁵⁷ and hoped to recruit people who had given up belief in an eternal salvation but yet desired to work to effect a this-worldly salvation.⁵⁸ This was Besant's first attempt to form an organization focused on a millennial goal. Besant's desire to form a new religion based on the service of humanity would shortly lead her to Theosophy and ultimately to the organization of the Order of the Star of the East.

The L.L.L. was divided into vigilante groups to watch for police violence and oppression of the poor, as well as to participate actively in local elections in the support of any candidate who supported free speech and was concerned about alleviating the plight of the poor.⁵⁹ Other organizations joined the L.L.L. including the National Secular Society, but the National Secular Society dropped out because of the fascist tendencies of the L.L.L. Bradlaugh feared that the Ironside Circles, as the vigilante groups were called, would resort to blackmailing offenders and he disapproved of the required pledge promising to follow the orders of the Captain of the group.⁶⁰

In 1888 Besant and Herbert Burrows, a Social Democratic Federation leader, contributed to the unionization movement by organizing the strike of the Bryant and May match girls. The matchmakers worked fourteen hours a day for less than five shillings a week and suffered from chemical poisoning. Besant and Burrows raised money to support the girls while they were on strike, and they formed a Matchmakers Union. The strike lasted three weeks and resulted in better working conditions for the girls. Subsequently, Besant and Burrows helped strikes by chainmakers, furriers, capmakers, tailors, tramwaymen, and house painters.⁶¹ G. M. Trevelyan in British History of the Nineteenth Century said that the matchmakers' strike was the "first skirmish of the new unionism."⁶²

Meanwhile, Besant became a member of the Social Democratic Federation while continuing her membership in the Fabian Society. Besant campaigned for and was elected to the London School Board. She worked for

. . . free secular education, free meals for poor children, new contracts for all types of School Board employees which would make the government subject to the same principles of employment and purchase of supplies as other employers, and other advanced measures.⁶³

Now that her attention was directed toward helping London school children, she allowed the Link and Our Corner to expire, and the L.L.L. also ended.

In the eyes of later labor leaders like George Lansbury, her big contributions to social reform at this time lay in her exposing the absurdity of the idea of trying to educate half-starving children, in her laying the foundation of the later system of medical examination and treatment in elementary schools, and in her destroying the strangle hold that sweaters had on public contracts. By the end of 1889 she herself boasted proudly that she had been the means of raising £185 to provide some thirty-six thousand lunches to needy children, and Lansbury praised her as "a 'Pioneer' on behalf of organized Labour" in the way in which she cut across the practices of the sweaters by inducing the School Board to insert into all its contracts a clause that all goods it purchased should be produced under trades-union conditions in respect to rates of pay and hours of labor. This news electrified the whole world of labor.⁶⁴

Besant's career as a socialist was marked by increased efforts to ameliorate current social condi-

tions which produced significant results. During these years, however, Besant began to wonder if social reform alone would produce the human condition which she desired.

Theosophy--Answers to Questions and Political Manuevering

In 1889 Besant reviewed H. P. Blavatsky's The Secret Doctrine for W. T. Stead's Pall Mall Gazette. Since 1886 Besant had been questioning the monistic materialism inherent in her atheism, and in doing so had been attending seances and studying experiments in hypnotism. Stead gave her the volumes saying "My young men all fight shy of them, but you are quite mad enough on these subjects to make something of them."⁶⁵ Besant was impressed with The Secret Doctrine and wrote a favorable review saying that any believer in progress should read and study the work.⁶⁶ Besant and Herbert Burrows went to visit Blavatsky who was living in London subsequent to the Coulomb affair. The Coulombs were domestic servants at the Theosophical Society's headquarters in Adyar, Madras, who charged Blavatsky with making use of sliding panels in a cupboard which materialized letters from the Mahatmas or Masters who guided the Theosophical Society. The Society for Psychical Research sent Richard Hodgson to Adyar to investigate and he wrote an unfavorable report.

Herbert Burrows joined the Theosophical Society, and Besant did as well on May 10, 1889, even though she had read Hodgson's report provided to her by Blavatsky. Prior to joining the Theosophical Society, Besant had begun to question whether mere social reform would create the condition in the world which she desired.

She had begun to wonder if some radical change in human nature was not necessary. In Theosophy, Besant found a philosophy that explained how this change in human nature would be brought about. Additionally, Theosophy taught the doctrines of reincarnation and karma which answered Besant's question concerning the reason for suffering and its relation to God.

Besant quickly became Blavatsky's most favored protegee. At Fontainebleau where she was vacationing with Blavatsky and Burrows, she saw the Master Morya, whom Theosophists believed was one of the true founders of the Theosophical Society. Blavatsky wrote to W. Q. Judge, one of the original founding members of the Theosophical Society and General Secretary of the American Section, that Besant "is the most wonderful woman, my right hand, my successor when I will be forced to leave you, my sole hope in England as you are my sole hope in America."⁶⁷ Besant became co-editor of Lucifer along with Blavatsky. She became a member of the Inner Group of the Esoteric Section which Blavatsky had formed to maintain contact with the Masters after the president of the Theosophical Society, Henry S. Olcott, decided to guide the Society away from "phenomena" as a result of the Coulomb affair. Besant's house quickly became the home and headquarters of Blavatsky and her disciples, and Besant was elected president of this group, the Blavatsky Lodge.

Bradlaugh had little patience with esoteric religions so naturally he was disappointed at Besant's conversion. His health was failing so he nominated G. W. Foote as president of the National Secular Society and he was elected. Foote had been ridiculing Besant's conversion to Theosophy for some time, so she resigned her position as a vice-president of the

National Secular Society. Shortly thereafter the Freethought Publishing Company was disbanded. Besant was still a member of the Social Democratic Federation and was still active in unionization, although she did resign from the Fabian Society.⁶⁸

Besant's influence on the Theosophical Society was to cause it to have a more practical impact in the world. One early instance of this was when she persuaded Blavatsky to use £1000 that she had received as a legacy to create a Home for Working Women at the East End of London.⁶⁹

In 1890 Besant met Charles W. Leadbeater who was to become a most influential person in her life and also the source of a lot of trouble for her. Leadbeater had been a priest in the Church of England from 1874 to 1884. He was interested in spiritualism and had some contact with Freethought. He joined the Theosophical Society in 1883 and studied with Blavatsky in India. Throughout his life he was the tutor of boys, so he returned to England to take charge of A. P. Sinnett's son and the young G. S. Arundale, who was destined to become the third president of the Theosophical Society. He brought with him a Sinhalese boy, Jinarajadasa, whom he had identified as being the reincarnation of his dead brother. Besant and Leadbeater would later collaborate in many forms of occult research.⁷⁰

Besant suffered two great losses in 1891. Bradlaugh died February 8 at age fifty-seven. While he was on his deathbed the House of Commons passed a measure expunging from the records the motion expelling him in 1880.⁷¹ Besant had visited him during his illness and was part of the family party at the

funeral. After his death, she did all she could to help pay off his debts.

While Besant was on a trip to the United States, Blavatsky died May 8, 1891. Besant inherited Blavatsky's ring and the custodianship of her papers. W. Q. Judge and Olcott met with Besant in London to settle the affairs of the Theosophical Society. During this time in London, Besant received several letters from the Masters. Besant and Judge became joint Outer Heads of the Esoteric Section.

Besant decided not to run for the London School Board again, and to devote herself to Theosophy as the best hope for the world. She also withdrew from the Malthusian League since Blavatsky had taught her that people must learn to practice self-restraint. She withdrew The Law of Population from the market and destroyed the plates. Later in her career, she would reconsider and rejoin the Malthusian League. At this time, Besant was no longer actively working for the socialists and began to withdraw from social work.⁷²

A power struggle for the presidency ensued between Judge and Olcott. Olcott had been threatening to resign due to his weak political position. He finally offered his resignation and it was accepted by Judge. Olcott in India subsequently wrote to Judge in the United States that he had changed his mind because his Master had told him that he should stay on. However, Judge did not announce this, and at the American convention he allowed himself to be elected the next international president. Judge then went to England for the European convention and was elected international president by that group. Only afterwards did they become aware of Olcott's change of mind. The Indian Section had voted not to have the presidency

filled during Olcott's lifetime but to have the vice-president carry out his duties. Olcott declared that Judge would be his successor only if he gave up any other offices held in the Theosophical Society. Olcott was concerned that Judge would have too much power if he were simultaneously international president and General Secretary of the American Section.⁷³

Judge was later charged with forging the Mahatma letters that Besant had received in London using materials that he had found in Blavatsky's rooms. He used a seal with the letter M on it, that he thought belonged to the Master Morya, but which Olcott had actually given to Blavatsky as a joke. Judge even slipped up and signed one Mahatma letter to a Dr. Blake with his own name. The thrust of the letters to Besant was to encourage her to cooperate with Judge and to try to alienate her from Olcott. The letters warned that Olcott would try to poison her if she went to India. A Judicial Committee was called in London to hear the charges. Olcott suspended Judge as vice-president. The Judicial Committee realized that the true issue at stake was the official recognition of the existence of the Masters, so Olcott ended the inquiry and reinstated Judge to the vice-presidency.⁷⁴

This did not end the Judge controversy and pressure mounted against Judge. Since she had been urging him to resign, Judge issued a statement deposing Besant from her office as joint head of the Esoteric Section. He accused Besant and Olcott of being under the influence of Black Magicians. As Besant began to push publically for Judge's resignation, the American Section under Judge's leadership withdrew from the Theosophical Society. Judge died March 21, 1896, at the age of forty-five.⁷⁵ The leadership of his group

was picked up by Katherine Tingley who subsequently founded a utopian community at Point Loma, California.

Interest in India

During the Judge controversy, in 1893, Besant visited India for the first time despite the warnings of poisoning. For some time she had felt that India was her true homeland and she had begun to remember past incarnations in India. She and Olcott became close friends and they embarked on a speaking tour of India intended to raise Indian pride in the native heritage, and particularly in Hinduism. British officials feared that she would enter Indian politics and stir up seditious feelings. She promised to stay out of Indian politics, and she did so for nearly twenty years.⁷⁶

Besant's visit to India was short and she returned to London. However, she would make subsequent visits to India, and it would eventually become the permanent base from which she would make all of her world-wide travels.

In 1896 and 1897 Besant began to make appeals to wealthy Indians to contribute funds for a college for Hindu boys in which they would be taught their own religion and Sanskrit in addition to a modern curriculum. This culminated in the Central Hindu College in Benares.

The great stress on Sanskrit in Indian higher education today is a direct result of Mrs. Besant's pioneering efforts at the end of the nineteenth century, combined with Olcott's more permanent building up at the Adyar Theosophical Library of one of the most

remarkable of all Sanskrit collections, today, chiefly in the form of palm-leaf manuscripts.⁷⁷

The Central Hindu College was affiliated with the University of Allahabad. Initially the college began the day with a Hindu prayer, but later prayers from the other Indian religions were added. Besant edited The Central Hindu College Magazine, A Journal for Boys, and accepted contributions from boys all over India. G. S. Arundale arrived to become the Head Master.⁷⁸ By 1905 the C.H.C. had over 100 students and ten teachers. Although Besant encouraged the boys to study history and politics, she felt very strongly that boys were too immature in judgment to participate actively in politics. She drew a lot of criticism when she refused to allow her Bengali students to protest the partition of Bengal in 1905. Instead she encouraged them to participate in a mock parliament set up at the school.⁷⁹

In 1904 the Central Hindu Girls' School was started. Miss Francesca Arundale, George's aunt and adoptive mother, was the principal and major financial supporter of this school. This was one of the first efforts to educate Indian girls.⁸⁰

Besant's interest in India which initially was manifested in lectures intended to uplift Indian pride and in educational work would eventually lead her to play a leading role in the early years of the movement for Indian Home Rule. Besant would come to feel that Indian self-government was a necessary part of her millenarian scheme.

Leadbeater--Occult Faculty and Scandal

From 1895 onward, Besant had been collaborating with Charles Leadbeater in various occult investigations. They had explored together the subtler levels of the universe.⁸¹ Their research on the atomic structure of various elements was eventually published in the book entitled Occult Chemistry. Their book, Thought-Forms, depicted in verbal and graphic manner the forms and colors that thought took in subtle matter.⁸²

Charles Leadbeater had long made a career as the tutor of boys. In January of 1906 charges were brought against Leadbeater for having immoral relations with two boys who were placed in his care while he was visiting the United States and Canada in 1903 and 1904. The boys (who were both fourteen at the time) charged that he had taken them into his own bed and taught them masturbation. A cipher letter was found in one of the homes which when decoded was found to read "Glad sensation is so pleasant. Thousand kisses darling."⁸³

Olcott called a meeting in London to hear the charges. Leadbeater admitted that he would sometimes advise boys to masturbate as a way of alleviating sexual tensions. He admitted that in some cases there might be some "indicative action." As a result of the inquiry Leadbeater resigned from the Theosophical Society. Olcott was suspicious of Jinarajadasa and cancelled his membership as well. Besant for a short time was estranged from Leadbeater. However, she became convinced that he had abandoned his sexual advising of boys, and they continued their clairvoyant

researches together even while he was an outcaste of the Theosophical Society.⁸⁴

Presidentship of the Theosophical Society

Meanwhile Olcott was very ill and had suffered two heart attacks. Besant was at Adyar with him during his last days. During his illness Besant carried out the duties of the president. Before his death, Olcott reported that the Master Morya and the Master Koot Hoomi had appeared to him several times with Besant and two other women as witnesses. The Masters told him that Besant should be his successor, and that Leadbeater's advice to boys was wrong although well-intentioned. Olcott died February 16, 1907.⁸⁵ It was very important to Besant that her presidentship and thus her policies had been sanctioned by the Masters.⁸⁶ She explained that the Masters, who had withdrawn from actively participating with the Theosophical Society due to members' disloyalty after the Coulomb affair, returned to the Society as the result of Besant's presidentship in 1907. She felt that the appearance of the Masters at Olcott's deathbed sanctioned her subsequent activities in relation to the World-Teacher and promoting brotherhood in the world.⁸⁷

Besant's election to the presidentship of the Theosophical Society was not without opposition by those who did not believe that the Mahatmas had appeared to Olcott. A crucial question in the minds of some members was Besant's attitude toward Leadbeater. She replied that she would only reinstate Leadbeater two years after a public repudiation of his teachings and then only on the approval of a majority of the

Theosophical Society. Prior to his death, Olcott had concluded that he had wrongly expelled Jinarajadasa, so he was reinstated by the General Council on Olcott's and Besant's recommendation.⁸⁸

Besant entered India on November 30, 1907, as President of the Theosophical Society. She founded the Theosophical Order of Service in which its members gave over their personal possessions and worked in the service of mankind. She founded the Round Table organization for children age thirteen and up. She expanded the estate at Adyar to 266 acres and began the many architectural improvements. She became editor of the Theosophist assisted by B. P. Wadia. Wadia also edited the Adyar Bulletin and was to join Besant in other publishing ventures.⁸⁹

Besant began to indicate that she would like to see Leadbeater reinstated. The General Council eventually reached a majority decision that the two year probation should be waived and Leadbeater was reinstated by the end of 1908. Quite a few Theosophists resigned over this issue, including the leaders who had opposed Besant's election. One of these was A. P. Sinnett. However, in 1909 the Society still had 15,617 active members and 631 lodges.⁹⁰

Expectation of the World-Teacher

In 1908 Besant and Leadbeater began lecturing on the imminent return of the Christ.⁹¹ Besant felt that a new race was developing and that the Christ or World-Teacher would come in order to propound the ideas to this race and to the world that would develop into a new civilization. When Besant returned to India from travels abroad, Leadbeater introduced her to

J. Krishnamurti, a twelve year old Brahmin boy that he felt would become the physical vehicle for the World-Teacher. Besant had already selected an American boy but this choice was dropped.⁹² Krishnamurti and his younger brother, Nityananda, were taken into headquarters to be cared for and tutored by Leadbeater and others. Besant persuaded their father, Narayaniah, to give her legal custody of the boys.

In various occult ceremonies, Leadbeater and Besant introduced Krishnamurti to the Lord Maitreya, i.e., the World-Teacher, who accepted Krishnamurti to be his physical vehicle in the world if his preparation was successful. This marked the beginning of Krishnamurti's instruction by the Masters while his physical body slept. Leadbeater was usually the guide on these encounters. Krishnamurti passed his first occult Initiation on January 11, 1910.⁹³

Leadbeater made extensive investigations into the past lives of Krishnamurti, Nityananda, and many other Theosophists. These were published as The Lives of Alcyone. Leadbeater and Besant continued their investigations into the past lives of various Theosophists and these were published in Man: Whence, How and Whither. In the second section of the book Leadbeater provided a description of the new civilization that was to develop in southern California.⁹⁴

A little book was published entitled At the Feet of the Master. It purported to be the instruction that Krishnamurti received nightly from the Master Koot Hoomi. Krishnamurti would write it down each morning upon awakening. Krishnamurti was just learning English at the time, so Leadbeater corrected it and got the Master's approval for the final version. Krishnamurti never publically made a statement as to the true

authorship of the book, but it has been reported that as a boy he was heard to say in Telegu that he was not the author.⁹⁵

George Arundale at the Central Hindu College created the Order of the Rising Sun to train the boys to be followers of the World-Teacher. Many people protested at the introduction of this new cult into the college so Besant abolished it. However, she next founded the Order of the Star in the East to function on an international scale. "This organisation was to be even more complex, with ranks and officers, uniforms and badges, passwords and signs, silver stars and golden stars, blue ribbons and purple ribbons, 'magnetised' by Krishnamurti and sold at a penny a quarter yard."⁹⁶ This group was still active at the Central Hindu College. Half of the staff threatened to resign and Arundale took a leave of absence to go to England in order to tutor Krishna and Nitya there.⁹⁷ A magazine, The Herald of the Star, was started in January 1912 to be the organ of the Order of the Star. Ostensibly it was edited by Krishnamurti, but for many years most of the duties were carried out by George Arundale and others.

Much earlier Besant had proposed that the Central Hindu College be made into the nucleus of a Hindu University. Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya had long been working to achieve a National Hindu University so he and Besant collaborated to achieve this goal. In order to get orthodox Hindu support, Besant had to promise that C.H.C. students would not be allowed to join the Order of the Star in the East. This work culminated in the founding of the Benares Hindu University with Malaviya at its head and Besant relegated to an honorary post in its governing body.⁹⁸

The Hindu University, after an initial struggle, eventually grew into the largest and perhaps the most impressive university in India, with a tremendous coeducational student body and a vast campus covered with beautiful buildings. But it has continued to treat the Central Hindu College, its true mother, as a sort of stepchild. As soon as Malaviya took over, he further offended Mrs. Besant and Bhagavan Das, who was still teaching Sanskrit and the Hindu religion, by destroying or stacking in a dark corner all the copies of the popular Dharma textbooks, since they did not teach his brand of modern Hindu orthodoxy.⁹⁹

Narayaniah began to demand that his sons be taken out of Besant's custody and returned to him. He objected to the lack of observance of caste rules, to the association of the boys with Leadbeater, to what he perceived as the worship of Krishnamurti, and the attribution of At the Feet of the Master to his son. He brought suit using the funds provided by the newspaper, the Hindu. Narayaniah charged that he had witnessed an incident involving Leadbeater and Krishna, but he later dropped this charge. The case was heard by the High Court of Madras. The main issue in the case was the nature of Leadbeater's relationship with the boy.¹⁰⁰

Besant conducted her own case as usual. While Besant examined Narayaniah he confessed that he had wrongfully accused Krishnamurti of having sexual relations with Leadbeater. Her personal servant, Lakshman, also claimed to have witnessed an illicit act on their part. During the trial he confessed that this

act consisted merely of the boy sitting on Leadbeater's knee while Leadbeater washed his hair. Leadbeater himself was called to the stand and stated that although he felt his earlier sexual teaching to boys was correct, he no longer gave this advice.¹⁰¹

The judge concluded that the stories of Narayaniah and Lakshman could not be trusted, but nevertheless ruled that the two boys should be returned to their father's custody because he could not have known that his son was intended to be the focus of a new religion. Costs of the trial were assigned to Narayaniah.

Besant appealed the decision in India unsuccessfully. Finally, she went to London where the two boys were consulted as to their wishes and consequently Narayaniah's case was dismissed.¹⁰² Throughout World War I the boys remained in England to be educated. Krishna and Nitya were refused admission to Oxford and Cambridge so they studied for admission to the London University. Nitya passed with honors and began to study for the Bar. Krishna repeatedly failed his matriculation exams. Krishna continued to be puzzled by the role expected of him as World-Teacher and wondered why he was chosen. George Arundale, through his close association with Krishna as his tutor, became disillusioned with him and lost his belief that he would be the World-Teacher's vehicle.¹⁰³

Mission to India

In 1913 Besant reported that she was charged by the Rishi Agastya, the Master who directed India's fate in the world, to obtain Home Rule for India. All of Besant's work to obtain Home Rule for India was motivated by her conviction that she had been directed by

the Masters to do so as Home Rule was the prerequisite for India becoming the spiritual leader of the world. Besant was convinced that the religious teaching of India would become the basis of a new civilization based on brotherhood which the World-Teacher would inaugurate. The Rishi Agastya also directed Besant to form a group of people who would take a stand on social reform in India, since social reform in India was likewise seen as necessary before India could take her place as spiritual leader of the world. Consequently Besant formed the Brothers of Service whose members pledged to discourage early marriage among members of their families. She embarked on a lecture series on social reform that was later published as Wake Up, India. At the beginning of 1914 Besant bought a weekly newspaper that she named the Commonweal, "A Journal of National Reform."¹⁰⁴ Shortly thereafter Besant had the opportunity to purchase the daily newspaper, the Madras Standard. She turned it into the New India. Her editorial partner was B. P. Wadia, who did much to support the newspaper financially.¹⁰⁵

Also in 1914 Besant founded the Young Men's Indian Association in Madras to promote devotion to India as Motherland. She revived her Sons and Daughters of India organization, which had been dormant since 1911, also to promote patriotism on the part of young people.¹⁰⁶ Later in 1916 since the Baden-Powell organization admitted only Europeans, she started the Indian Boy Scouts' Association. Eventually this organization was affiliated with the Baden-Powell group.¹⁰⁷ These organizations were important to Besant not only to promote patriotism in India, but also to promote a sense of brotherhood and connection with other young people in the world. All of these

organizations impressed on their young members the importance of service and self-sacrifice.¹⁰⁸

In Indian politics Besant found herself occupying a middle ground between the Moderates and the Extremists. The Moderates welcomed British rule for having introduced social reform to India as well as the ideal of a secular, liberal democracy. They emphasized gradual and careful work with the British to attain self-government. The Extremists were Hindu revivalists and advocated immediate expulsion of the British. The independent India that they envisioned would preserve the vested interests of higher members of the caste system. A few advocated terrorism, and all supported measures such as the boycott of British goods and institutions and the refusal to pay taxes.¹⁰⁹ Besant hoped to restrain the Extremists and to push the Moderates into more action. While emphasizing the greatness of India's indigenous civilization, she wanted to preserve the bond between Great Britain and India as members of a commonwealth. She was convinced that the commonwealth tie was essential to India's future role as religious teacher of the world.

Besant introduced to India the use on a nationwide scale of political agitation as she had learned it from Bradlaugh. This included "monster" meetings, newspaper and pamphlet campaigns, and litigation. Besant formed her all-India Home Rule League in September 1916. Besant's League was strongest in Bombay city, Gujarat, Sind, the United Provinces, Bihar, and southern India, those areas where the Theosophical Society's strength was great. Her League, as well as the Home Rule League of Tilak, demonstrated for future Indian politicians the importance of having an organization based on a network of local political committees. Many young men,

such as Jawaharlal Nehru, were given their first experience of performing responsible political tasks in Besant's League.¹¹⁰

From the beginning, Besant had ambivalent feelings toward Mohandas Gandhi. She had praised his work in South Africa. Eventually, however, she concluded that his method of Satyagraha or non-cooperation, despite being based on the principle of ahimsa or harmlessness, could only result in violence. Non-cooperation with the laws of the land only encouraged rampant lawlessness on the part of the masses. Whereas she herself had violated certain laws in the past that she considered unjust, she pointed out that she did so on her own initiative, fought her cases in court and either won or suffered the consequences, and never encouraged others to do likewise.

Therefore, on February 3, 1916, when the ceremony was held to lay the foundation stone of the Hindu University, relations were already somewhat strained between Besant and Gandhi. There are conflicting accounts of what actually happened at this solemn event. After Besant had spoken, Gandhi, who had arrived late, got up and insulted the Maharajas on the platform by pointing out the difference between their richly dressed and bejewelled persons and the pitiful condition of the Indian masses. Then he began to speak on anarchism and the assassinations in Bengal. Besant jumped up and tried to stop him, but the Maharaja of Dharbanga allowed him to continue. Finally, the other Maharajas walked off the platform. Besant was furious at Gandhi for ruining the occasion, and he was mad at her for interrupting.¹¹¹ Later they both tried to smooth over the incident, but their fundamental differences continued to become more and more apparent.

Under the Press Act, the government began to demand security from New India which was paid. Because of her political speeches Besant was externed from Bombay Province. The New India security was forfeited and more money was paid. Besant was then externed from the Central Provinces and Bihar. This later culminated in the internment of Besant, B. P. Wadia, and George Arundale in the summer of 1917 at Ootacamund for their political statements in New India. The internees were later moved to Coimbatore. This internment caused a loud public outcry. Swadeshi, or using Indian-made goods only, was advocated as a form of protest. Gandhi even proposed a Satyagraha campaign in the form of a march from Bombay to Coimbatore, but the idea was dropped.¹¹²

After an internment of ninety-four days, Besant, Wadia, and Arundale were released on September 18, 1917. A joint meeting of the All-India Congress Committee and the Moslem League had earlier passed resolutions demanding Besant's release and supporting at least partial self-government by the end of the war. The internment resulted in temporarily uniting the Moderates and the Extremists and in doubling the membership of Besant's Home Rule League. E. S. Montagu who had just been appointed the Secretary of State for India promised that he would tour India along with the Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford, to ascertain personally the true condition of the country. Besant's popularity due to the internment also resulted in her election as President of the Indian National Congress.¹¹³

Immediately after her release, Besant went on a speaking tour of India accompanied by Wadia and Arundale. In November she met with Montagu as a member of a joint deputation of the Indian National Congress,

the Moslem League, and the two Home Rule Leagues (Besant was a member of Tilak's Home Rule League and he likewise was a member of her League). She employed sly tactics to be able to speak with Montagu privately. Later she met Montagu in Madras as a member of the deputations from the Madras Congress Committee and the Women's Indian Association.¹¹⁴

The Congress convention of which she was president met that December in Calcutta. In her presidential address she announced that she intended to change the post into an active year-long job. Previously the president who was elected for one year really only functioned actively during the annual meeting. Besant's statement turned many of the more conservative leaders against her because they feared that she would become too powerful. True to her word, she embarked on yet another speaking tour of India, asked for volunteers to do political work in rural areas, and arranged for a deputation to go to England.¹¹⁵

When the Montagu-Chelmsford Report was published in 1918, Besant along with most Indians was disappointed by the few concessions made. She attacked the proposals in both her newspapers. Initially she advised that they should not be accepted and that counter-proposals be made. At a meeting in Madras to discuss the proposals, the rumor had been spread that she backed the government and she was consequently shouted down. At a special session of the Congress called to discuss the proposals, Besant was persuaded by Jinnah that the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms were a first step toward Home Rule.¹¹⁶

At the subsequent annual meeting of Congress, Malaviya was elected to succeed Besant as president. The great majority of the Congress delegates voted to

reject the Reforms, whereas Besant and Jinnah were very much in the minority in supporting them.¹¹⁷

Besant became very unpopular because of her support of the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms. She was re-elected president of her Home Rule League, and Jinnah, Motilal Nehru, Aiyengar and others were vice-presidents, but many Indian leaders and the masses perceived her as turning against the cause of Home Rule. In the National Congress she felt that she was caught between the Extremists and the Moderates. Tilak and his followers refused to have any contact with her. Meanwhile, Gandhi decided to conduct Satyagraha against the Rowlatt Acts. Besant met with him personally to try to persuade him to not involve the masses of the Indian people. When he refused, she publically predicted that this course of action would lead to public lawlessness and violence. After violence broke out in Delhi which was initiated by the satyagrahis, she wrote "As a Government's first duty is to stop violence . . . before a riot becomes unmanageable, brickbats must inevitably be answered by bullets in every civilised country." This "Brickbats and Bullets" statement was remembered by the Indian public for years and earned her many enemies who did not recall the context in which the statement was made. As the events of the Satyagraha moved on, more violence erupted in northwestern India resulting in many deaths, and culminating in General Dyer's troops firing on a helpless crowd contained within the Jallianwala Bagh grounds at Amritsar. Besant felt that the government's military action at Delhi and Ahmedabad had been an appropriate response, but she felt that Dyer should be tried for his crime at Amritsar. However, she incurred even more unpopularity by opposing the use of Satya-

graha by the popular Gandhi and she was wrongfully accused of condoning General Dyer's action.¹¹⁸

Because of Besant's position on Gandhi's Satyagraha and of her position on government use of force, many members of her Home Rule League including Motilal and Jawaharlal Nehru, resigned and went over to Tilak's All-India Home Rule League. Tilak's Home Rule League requested that Besant resign her membership in it. Besant reconstituted what remained of her own League as the National Home Rule League.¹¹⁹

Since the war was over, Besant was able to travel to England in June, 1919. While in England she visited with Krishna and Nitya and lectured on Home Rule for India. She attended the meeting of the Select Joint Committee of the Lords and Commons that was considering the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms. When she addressed the committee herself, she spoke in favor of "diarchy, fiscal control by Indians, and the adoption of a literacy qualification rather than a sex qualification for voting."¹²⁰ She supported the committee's report on the Reforms as being more liberal than the original bill. The bill in this condition was duly made into law.¹²¹

Besant returned to India in time for the Congress meeting which was being held at Amritsar with Motilal Nehru as the president. Besant put forward a resolution demanding that General Dyer be relieved of his command. Her motion was passed unanimously, but a lot of hostility was still directed toward her. Besant moved to welcome the Reform Act as a first step but was defeated. Gandhi, Jinnah, and Malaviya held a similar view with more emphasis on working for further changes. Tilak and his group completely rejected the Act and asserted that India was ready to take on the

responsibility of self-government. Finally Congress passed a resolution combining the points of view of Tilak and Gandhi, and calling on the people to cooperate with the reforms while reserving the right to agitate for further reform. The Liberals, consisting mostly of New India people, and the Moderates were largely not in attendance at the conference. Besant was convinced that most of the delegates had not even read the Act. Shortly after this Congress meeting, Tilak died.¹²²

When Besant set out on another lecture tour of India she found that she was shouted off the platform because of her opposition to Satyagraha. She became further estranged from Gandhi due to her opposition to the Khilafat movement, which Gandhi advocated to gain closer ties with the Muslims. Gandhi joined the All-India National Home Rule League and was elected its president. As a consequence the League removed from its principles the statement that it desired the maintenance of the connection between India and Great Britain. At this point Jinnah and twenty other persons resigned. A Special Session of the Congress adopted Gandhi's new program which included the boycott of the Provincial Councils created by the Reform Act. Gandhi also proposed that Indians should withdraw from all schools showing sympathy with the English, including the Hindu University, Aligarh College, and Khalsa College at Amritsar. When Besant spoke out in opposition to this measure he called for all students to leave any school founded by her.¹²³

As a consequence of these differences Besant did not attend the following Congress convention. At this convention a resolution was passed stating that the object of the Congress was the attainment of Swarajya

or complete independence "by all legitimate and peaceful means."¹²⁴

In 1920 when the All-India Congress Committee voted to support Non-Cooperation, Besant resigned from the Indian National Congress. Gandhi began to emphasize his program of spinning, burning foreign cloth, uplift of the untouchables, prohibition of liquor and drugs, and unity among Hindus and Muslims. Violence erupted in Bombay as the result of a hartal, or general strike, boycotting the Prince of Wales' visit. Besant suggested a Round Table Conference of the Viceroy, Gandhi, and leaders of other organizations working for Home Rule. The Viceroy extended the invitation to Gandhi but withdrew it due to Gandhi's hesitation. Gandhi was made the sole executive authority of the Congress with the power to name a successor and to call special sessions. On March 11 Gandhi was arrested for sedition and sentenced to six years. Other Congress leaders were likewise imprisoned. Gandhi was released two years later in February 1924 due to poor health and to the fact that Congress leadership was weakened.¹²⁵

Besant proposed that Indians should frame a constitution to present to Great Britain for approval. She convened a National Convention consisting of elected members and ex-members of the Central and Provincial Legislatures sympathetic to her project. The resulting Commonwealth of India Bill provided for a graduated franchise and a series of organizational units of government extending from the village pañchāyat to Provincial Councils and the Central Government.¹²⁶ To gain support for this scheme Besant rejoined the Congress party and learned how to spin in order to produce the 2,000 yards of yarn per month

which were now required for Congress membership. She appeared at the annual Congress meeting and made one rambling speech and then left.¹²⁷

Gandhi did not approve the Commonwealth of India Bill because "it recognised the King-Emperor as Sovereign, an attitude which dumbfounded Dr. Besant because, as she pointed out, Congress had always rejected the separation of India from the Empire, and Gandhi was still President of Congress."¹²⁸ For various reasons, none of the other Indian leaders supported her Bill. Nevertheless she travelled to England to present it to Parliament where she hoped for support from the Labour Party. The Labour Party supported the general concept of a constitution framed by Indians, although it refused to support Besant's bill. In December 1925 George Lansbury presented the Bill as a private member but it received very little support and was quickly forgotten.¹²⁹

Besant nevertheless proceeded with her efforts to procure a constitution for India. Her National Home Rule League began to use the name, the Commonwealth of India League. In 1927 Motilal Nehru proposed that the Working Committee of the All-India Congress Committee should frame a constitution "in consultation with the elected members of the Central and Provincial legislatures and party leaders."¹³⁰ Nehru's proposal was approved and Besant at the All-Parties Conference on a Swaraj Constitution moved that a committee be appointed to draft the constitution.¹³¹ This draft came to be known as the Nehru Report, and Besant shifted her support to it, although she disagreed with its provision for universal suffrage, favoring instead a "graduated suffrage according to literacy."¹³² The All-Parties Conference at Lucknow in 1928 appointed

Besant to the Nehru Committee in order to assist in preparing a Bill based on the Nehru Report.¹³³

The Nehru Report provided for Dominion Status for India, but other Indian leaders including Jawaharlal Nehru, Motilal Nehru's son, began to demand that complete independence should be the goal. The Working Committee of the Congress resolved that complete independence was the goal. Gandhi compromised by saying that if Dominion Status was not achieved by December 31, 1929, he would lead the fight for complete independence. In the meantime he would initiate a new Non-Cooperation campaign. Gandhi then adjourned the Congress, and the Working Committee was given the authority to reconvene Congress only when it deemed necessary. Motilal Nehru, under Gandhi's influence, adjourned the All-Parties Conference. Besant resolved to continue to fight for the Nehru Report although Motilal Nehru himself no longer did so. M. Nehru had been elected president of Congress, but of course the Congress was actually under Gandhi's control. Besant consequently ceased to work with Congress and joined the Liberal Federation.¹³⁴ She continued to speak up for Dominion Status in India and abroad.

Besant had long ago lost her influence in Indian politics to the more popular and indigenous Gandhi. By this time, the events were completely beyond her influence, and she had become too elderly to even attempt to have an impact. The situation would finally be resolved in the attainment of Dominion Status in 1947, long after her death in 1933, but essentially in the manner for which she had wished. By that time, however, much violence had resulted from Satyagraha and communal tensions, and it would be impossible to preserve a unified India.¹³⁵

The World-Teacher

From 1924 onward as Besant's political influence in India waned and as Krishnamurti matured, she turned her attention more and more to him as the physical vehicle of the World-Teacher to deliver a message which would bring about the universal brotherhood which she desired to see actualized in the world. Besant lectured world-wide on topics such as "The Coming of the World-Teacher" and "Civilisation's Deadlocks" which the World-Teacher would resolve. Meetings known as Star Camps were held in India, Ommen, Holland, and Ojai, California. At these Camps Krishnamurti began to address his followers and he also began to try to change the role that had been set out for him.

After Krishnamurti's custody trial, Leadbeater had moved to Sydney, Australia, where he continued his work with young people through such organizations as the Order of the Star in the East, In the King's Service, The Golden Chain, and The Order of the Round Table. His home became a center where young people were trained in the Path of Purification which was punctuated by various Initiations.¹³⁶

In 1916 a fellow Theosophist, James Wedgwood, after being consecrated bishop in the Old Catholic Church, had travelled to Australia and made Leadbeater a bishop. The Old Catholic Church stemmed

. . . from a small group of German rebels against the Papal See when the controversial doctrine of Papal Infallibility had been proclaimed in 1870, it had associated itself with the Old Catholic Church in Holland, also known as the Jansenist Church after the seventeenth-

century ecclesiastical reformer and bishop, Cornelius Jansen, whose later followers had set themselves up independently from the mother church in the early eighteenth century.¹³⁷

Leadbeater, with Besant's approval, proposed to build this church up as the new Christian church for the coming World-Teacher. The Old Catholic Church refused to have anything to do with this development, so the Theosophical group changed its name to the Liberal Catholic Church.¹³⁸ The association of the Liberal Catholic Church with the Theosophical Society drew opposition from a number of Theosophists, particularly in Australia. Despite this, the Liberal Catholic Church has continued to function, its membership drawn mainly from Theosophists.

Charges were again brought against Leadbeater for taking advantage of boys who had been placed in his care. Krishnamurti and Nityananda, who had returned to India in December 1921, went to Australia in 1922 where Krishna testified to Leadbeater's purity. Finally Besant also travelled to Australia to defend Leadbeater. She cancelled the charter of the Sydney Lodge and expelled the persons who brought the charges against Leadbeater. A new group was formed in Sydney called the Blavatsky Lodge. The authorities in Sydney did not prosecute Leadbeater because they felt there was not enough evidence.¹³⁹

Nityananda had been ill for some time due to lung problems. In 1922 the two young men went to stay at Ojai, California, in the hope that the climate would benefit Nitya's health. Blavatsky had predicted that California would be the birthplace of the new sub-race which would live the principle of brotherhood, and

certain ethnologists seemed to confirm that a new racial type was indeed developing there. Besant formed a trust fund to purchase the cottage and land for Krishna and Nitya where they lived at Ojai. While at Ojai, Krishna felt the presence of the Lord Maitreya one evening as he sat under a peppertree. This was only one episode in a painful process which continued intermittently throughout his life, which Krishnamurti and his closest friends at first interpreted as the raising of his kundalini. Besant felt that this physical process was necessary to allow the Lord Maitreya to inhabit Krishnamurti's body. This process entailed a loss of consciousness, delirium, and intense pain at the back of the neck and head.¹⁴⁰

It was reported that Besant had lost her occult faculties much earlier due to her intense involvement with Indian politics, so she had to rely on people such as Leadbeater, Arundale, and Wedgwood to inform her of occult events. Jinarajadasa later explained it as a matter of voluntarily giving up her occult faculties when she found that keeping her brain open to clairvoyance, clairaudience, and astral memories was dangerous while immersed in practical politics. However, Jinarajadasa described her as retaining the ability to remember orders from the Occult Hierarchy concerning her work in India, although these were usually corroborated by Leadbeater.¹⁴¹

In 1925 a Star Camp was held in Ommen but Krishnamurti and Nitya remained in Ojai due to Nitya's health. Just prior to the Camp Arundale announced that he and number of other individuals had passed various occult Initiations. In addition he was ordained a priest in the Liberal Catholic Church, and within days he was made a bishop. He announced that he, Wedgwood,

Jinarajadasa (in India), and Krishnamurti (in Ojai) had passed their Fourth Initiations and were now Arhats. Besant and Leadbeater were already Arhats. Arundale also announced that the Lord Maitreya would select twelve Apostles who would prepare for his coming in the world. Ten had already been picked and they were Besant, Leadbeater, Jinarajadasa, Wedgwood, Arundale, Arundale's wife, the young Rukmini Devi, Nityananda, Rajagopal, Lady Emily Lutyens, and Oscar Köllerström. Besant announced the naming of the Apostles at the Star Camp. Before the end of the Camp, Arundale revealed that Besant, Leadbeater, Jinarajadasa, himself, Wedgwood, and Krishnamurti had passed their Fifth Initiations and could evolve no further as human beings. It was later discovered that Rukmini Devi had also passed the Fourth and Fifth Initiations.¹⁴²

When Krishnamurti was informed of all these astral events, he did not believe in them. He left Nitya in Ojai and met the group in Europe. Krishnamurti tried to speak to Besant about it but to no avail. At this time his brother Nitya died. This was a devastating event for Krishnamurti, but he regained his equilibrium by feeling that he and his brother had become one. A witness related that Krishnamurti had believed that the Masters would not allow Nitya to die, therefore this event completely shattered his faith in the Masters and in the future as prescribed by Besant and Leadbeater.¹⁴³

Besant, Krishnamurti, and the others travelled to Adyar for the annual convention of the Theosophical Society at Christmas. When Leadbeater arrived from Australia, he indicated that he too did not believe in the crop of Initiations, although he conceded that Krishnamurti had passed his Fourth Initiation.¹⁴⁴

On December 28, 1925, Krishnamurti spoke to a gathering of Star members underneath the majestic banyan tree on the Adyar estate. While speaking of the World-Teacher he suddenly shifted to the first person and said,

. . . I come for those who want sympathy; who want happiness, who are longing to be released, who are longing to find happiness in all things. I come to reform and not to tear down, I come not to destroy but to build.¹⁴⁵

Besant and others felt that this was the Lord Maitreya speaking through Krishnamurti's body. Krishnamurti, too, felt that this was a significant event. Eventually he would announce that "I and the Beloved are one" and that he had reached enlightenment and could speak as the World-Teacher, although it did not matter whether or not people believed he was the World-Teacher. He desired to share his experience of enlightenment with others and so embarked on his career as world-wide lecturer. Besant concluded that there had been a blending of Krishnamurti's personality with that of the Lord Maitreya, instead of Krishnamurti vacating his physical body in order to hand it over to the Lord Maitreya as she had originally expected.

When Krishnamurti began to lecture in a manner not in accordance with Theosophical doctrines, Wedgwood suggested to Besant that Krishnamurti was under the influence of Black Magicians rather than the Lord Maitreya. When confronted by Besant, Krishnamurti threatened never to speak again if she believed that assertion.¹⁴⁶ Thereafter, Besant never uttered any doubt about Krishnamurti and always identified herself as his disciple even when his teachings contradicted

her beliefs. Besant and Krishnamurti spent some time together in Ojai in 1926. Besant purchased 465 acres at Ojai to be the founding site of the New Civilization, set up the Happy Valley Foundation, and began to ask for donations.¹⁴⁷

Since the Lord had come, the Order of the Star dropped the phrase "in the East" and the Herald of the Star became the Star Review.¹⁴⁸ Krishnamurti began to tell his audiences that they could not gain liberation by relying on him or on the Masters, but they must liberate themselves. He made it clear that he did not want to be worshipped.

Briefly, Rukmini Devi was put forth by Besant and Leadbeater as being the World Mother, but this new idea was soon dropped because Rukmini never felt that she was the World Mother. She went on to distinguish herself as the founder of the Kalakshetra school of arts which has specialized in reviving the classical Indian dance form, Bharata Natya.¹⁴⁹

While Besant was in England in 1928, she became ill and lost her faculties for several days as a result of some news concerning Krishnamurti. Increasingly he was making it clear that he did not want to be worshipped and had no intention of founding a new religion. He intended to keep the Order of the Star only so long as it functioned as a means to bring his message of liberation to the world. If it ceased to perform that function then it was of no use to him. When Besant recovered she still felt she was his humble disciple and for his sake she closed the Esoteric Section. George Arundale, however, told Krishnamurti directly that he did not believe he was the World-Teacher.¹⁵⁰

At a private meeting of prominent Theosophists at Benares it was resolved not to admit that Krishnamurti had gone astray, but to say that he was pursuing his own path. After one year, Besant restored the Esoteric Section, although at the annual Theosophical Society convention she ordered that there should be no rituals.¹⁵¹

At a Star Camp in Ommen in 1929 Krishnamurti dissolved the Order of the Star. Besant was present and she publically said that this action was in agreement with Krishnamurti's teachings. "My fundamental belief in Krishnamurti as the World-Teacher makes me more inclined to observe and study rather than express an opinion on one whom I consider far my superior."¹⁵² The properties of the Order were dispersed with a trust fund set up for Krishnamurti. On this basis he was able to continue to hold Camps at Ojai, Benares, and Ommen. During World War II the Ommen Star Camp property was appropriated by the Nazis and used as a concentration camp. The Happy Valley Foundation at Ojai has continued under the auspices of the Theosophical Society until this day,¹⁵³ and a Happy Valley School for high school students is operated there.

Up until this point, Besant had been aged but very vigorous. Her health began to decline, and finally in 1932 she did not care to leave her room at Adyar.¹⁵⁴ She was visited by Krishnamurti during the annual Theosophical convention.¹⁵⁵

Besant died on September 20, 1933. Her body was cremated and Leadbeater lit the pyre. Part of the ashes were distributed into the Ganges at Benares by Bhagavan Das, her old colleague in Sanskrit studies. The rest of her ashes were deposited at a Garden of

Remembrance built at the site of the cremation, which Besant had originally consecrated as the site of the Order of Service. Leadbeater died six months later and his ashes too were buried at the Garden of Remembrance.¹⁵⁶ George Arundale was elected to be the third President of the Theosophical Society and he ruled Krishnamurti off the Society's estate at Adyar. Krishnamurti, however, continued to go to the area in conjunction with the December conventions until the end of his life in 1986. He delivered his talks at a nearby estate, and many Theosophists were glad to go and listen. The present President of the Theosophical Society, Radha Burnier, was a close friend of Krishnamurti and a student of his thought even prior to her election to the presidency of the T.S. Krishnamurti first returned to the T.S. estate on November 4, 1980, as her guest.¹⁵⁷ Whenever Krishnamurti was in Madras, they would often be seen walking together on the Adyar beach at sunset.

Notes

¹Annie Besant, Autobiographical Sketches (London: Freethought Publishing Company, 1885), p. 9.

²Ibid.

³Annie Besant, Annie Besant: An Autobiography (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1908), pp. 25-26.

⁴Besant, Autobiographical Sketches, pp. 14, 19, 23.

⁵Ibid., p. 18; Besant, An Autobiography, pp. 36, 38-40.

⁶Besant, Autobiographical Sketches, pp. 24, 27.

⁷Besant, An Autobiography, pp. 56-57.

⁸Ibid., pp. 65-68; Besant, Autobiographical Sketches, pp. 35-37.

⁹Besant, Autobiographical Sketches, pp. 32-34.

¹⁰Besant, An Autobiography, p. 72

¹¹Ibid., pp. 73-77.

¹²Ibid., pp. 72-73.

¹³Besant, Autobiographical Sketches, pp. 49-50, 55.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 55.

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 55-56, 60.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 58.

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 60-61.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 61; Warren Sylvester Smith, The London Heretics 1870-1914 (London: Constable & Co. Ltd, 1967), pp. 127-29; Owen Chadwick, The Victorian Church, Part 2 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 134.

¹⁹Besant, Autobiographical Sketches, p. 62.

²⁰Ibid., pp. 64-67.

²¹Ibid., pp. 67-69.

²²Ibid., pp. 70, 73.

²³Ibid., p. 72.

²⁴Ibid., pp. 73-75.

²⁵Arthur H. Nethercot, The First Five Lives of Annie Besant (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1960), p. 57.

²⁶Annie Besant, "Natural Religion Versus Revealed Religion," in My Path to Atheism (London: Freethought Publishing Company, 1877), pp. 110-15; Annie Besant, "On Inspiration," in My Path to Atheism (London: Freethought Publishing Company, 1877), pp. 88-89. Despite similarities to deism in emphasis on the operation of natural law, Besant was at this time a theist since she conceived of God as Creator or Father with whom a kind of personal relationship may be had. At this early point in her thought Besant was much attracted to pantheism, but as a theist preferred to adopt the view that nature was the result of the reflection of deity rather than the indwelling of deity. See Annie Besant, "On the Religious Education of Children," in My Path to Atheism (London: Freethought Publishing Company, 1877), pp. 97-98; Encyclopedic Dictionary of Religion, 1979 ed., s.v. Deism, Theism, and "Pantheism."

²⁷Besant, Autobiographical Sketches, pp. 86-87.

²⁸Ibid., p. 89.

²⁹Ibid., pp. 89-91.

³⁰Smith, The London Heretics, pp. 31, 35-36; Champion of Liberty: Charles Bradlaugh (London: C. A. Watts & Co. Ltd. and The Pioneer Press, 1933), pp. 3-8, 12.

³¹Besant, An Autobiography, pp. 265-67.

³²Nethercot, The First Five Lives, p. 94; Besant, Autobiographical Sketches, pp. 102-4; John Saville, ed., A Selection of the Social and Political Pamphlets of Annie Besant (New York: Augustus M. Kelley, Publishers, 1970).

³³Nethercot, The First Five Lives, pp. 107, 110-12.

³⁴Annie Besant, The Law of Population: Its Consequences, and Its Bearing upon Human Conduct and Morals (London: Freethought Publishing Company, 1891).

³⁵Besant, Autobiographical Sketches, pp. 114-16.

³⁶Nethercot, The First Five Lives, pp. 125-29.

³⁷Besant, Autobiographical Sketches, pp. 150, 152, 155.

³⁸Nethercot, The First Five Lives, p. 129.

³⁹Besant, Autobiographical Sketches, pp. 160-62, 166-67.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 168.

⁴¹Nethercot, The First Five Lives, p. 144.

⁴²Besant, An Autobiography, pp. 246-47, 250.

⁴³Ibid., pp. 249-50.

⁴⁴Annie Besant, "A Hindu Legend," Our Corner 1 (January 1883): 55-58; Annie Besant, "A Greek Legend," Our Corner 1 (February 1883): 119-22; Annie Besant, "A Christian Legend," Our Corner 1 (March 1883): 183-85; Annie Besant, "A Hindu Legend," Our Corner 1 (April 1883): 247-49; Annie Besant, "A Jewish Legend," Our Corner 1 (May 1883): 310-12; Annie Besant, "Two Legends," Our Corner 2 (July 1883): 54-57; Annie Besant, "Two Legends," Our Corner 2 (August 1883): 118-21; J. M. Wheeler, "The Hindu 'Song Celestial'," Our Corner 7 (January 1886): 11-14; Ludwig Büchner, "The Origin and Progress of Religion," Our Corner 7 (January 1886): 14-21.

⁴⁵"Max Müller on the Conception of the Infinite," National Reformer (London), 5 May 1878, pp. 1201-2; D., "Mr. Max Müller on Religion," National Reformer (London), 5 May 1878, pp. 1202-3; Annie Besant, "Daybreak," National Reformer (London), 12 May 1878, p. 1226.

⁴⁶Edwin Arnold, The Light of Asia, in Annie Besant, "REVIEWS. The Light of Asia; being the Life and

Teaching of Gautama, Prince of India, and Founder of Buddhism. By EDWIN ARNOLD, M.A., F.R.G.S., &c. (London: Trubner and Co., Ludgate Hill, 1879.), "National Reformer (London), 10 August 1879, pp. 523-24.

47"REVIEW. The Philosophy of the Upanishads and Ancient Indian Metaphysics. By A. E. Gough., "National Reformer (London), 22 October 1882, p. 279; "REVIEW. Manual of Hindu Pantheism. The Vedantasara, translated, with copious annotations. By Major G. A. Jacob., "National Reformer (London), 5 November 1882, p. 311; Annie Besant, "Christianity Before Christ," Parts 1-10, "National Reformer (London), 8 August 1886, pp. 86-87, 15 August 1886, pp. 106-7, 22 August 1886, pp. 118-19, 29 August 1886, pp. 134-35, 5 September 1886, pp. 148-49, 12 September 1886, pp. 164-65, 19 September 1886, pp. 181-82, 26 September 1886, pp. 198-99, 3 October 1886, pp. 213-14, 10 October 1886, pp. 228-29.

48Nethercot, The First Five Lives, pp. 194-97; A Theosophist [pseud.] "CORRESPONDENCE. The Theosophical Society.," "National Reformer (London), 5 November 1882, p. 310.

49Nethercot, The First Five Lives, p. 199; A. T. Barker, trans. and comp., The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett from the Mahatmas M. & K.H. (London): T. Fisher Unwin Ltd, 1923), pp. 244-45, 405; George E. Linton and Virginia Hanson, eds., Readers Guide to The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett (Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1972), p. 214.

50Barker, p. 245.

51Edward Royle, Radical Politics 1790-1900: Religion and Unbelief (London: Longman Group Limited, 1971), p. 77

52Besant, An Autobiography, pp. 301-2.

53Nethercot, The First Five Lives, p. 218.

54Norman and Jeanne MacKenzie, The Fabians (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1977), pp. 54-55, 81-82, 93.

55Nethercot, The First Five Lives, pp. 237-38; Annie Besant and Charles Bradlaugh, "Personal," "National Reformer (London), 23 October 1887, pp. 265-66.

⁵⁶Nethercot, The First Five Lives, pp. 242-48.

⁵⁷Annie Besant and William T. Stead, "To Our Fellow Servants," Link (London), 4 February 1888, p. 1.

⁵⁸The Ground of Our Hope, Link (London), 18 February 1888, p. 1.

⁵⁹General Meeting of the Law and Liberty League, Link (London), 4 February 1888, p. 4.

⁶⁰Nethercot, The First Five Lives, pp. 253-54.

⁶¹MacKenzie, pp. 91-92.

⁶²Nethercot, The First Five Lives, p. 263.

⁶³Ibid., p. 267.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 271.

⁶⁵Besant, An Autobiography, p. 340.

⁶⁶Annie Besant, "Among the Adepts. Madame Blavatsky on 'The Secret Doctrine.' Review by ANNIE BESANT. Pall Mall Gazette April 25, 1889," in The Annie Besant Centenary Book, ed. James H. Cousins (Adyar, Madras: The Besant Centenary Celebrations Committee, 1947), pp. 43-44.

⁶⁷Nethercot, The First Five Lives, p. 306.

⁶⁸Ibid., pp. 315-19.

⁶⁹Ibid., p. 336.

⁷⁰Ibid., pp. 325-27.

⁷¹Royle, p. 63.

⁷²Nethercot, The First Five Lives, pp. 361-62.

⁷³Ibid., pp. 382-85.

⁷⁴Arthur H. Nethercot, The Last Four Lives of Annie Besant (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1963), pp. 28-31.

⁷⁵Ibid., p. 37-41, 54.

⁷⁶Ibid., pp. 16-23.

⁷⁷Ibid., pp. 62-63.

⁷⁸Ibid., pp. 67-71.

⁷⁹Ibid., pp. 86-88.

⁸⁰Ibid., p. 73.

⁸¹C. Jinarajadasa, Occult Investigations: A Description of the Work of Annie Besant and C. W. Leadbeater (Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1938).

⁸²Annie Besant and C. W. Leadbeater, Occult Chemistry, ed. C. Jinarajadasa, 3rd and enl. ed. (Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1951); Annie Besant and C. W. Leadbeater, Thought Forms (Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1901).

⁸³Nethercot, The Last Four Lives, pp. 91-96.

⁸⁴Ibid., pp. 96-98. For a complete discussion of the life of C. W. Leadbeater and the charges against him, see Gregory Tillett, The Elder Brother: A Biography of Charles Webster Leadbeater, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982).

⁸⁵Nethercot, The Last Four Lives, pp. 100-105.

⁸⁶Annie Besant, "Address of the President of the T.S. To the Convention of the American Section. September, 1907," The Theosophist 29 (October 1907): 11-12.

⁸⁷Annie Besant, The Theosophical Society and the Occult Hierarchy (London: The Theosophical Publishing House Limited, 1925), pp. 13-14, 20, 23-25, 43, 45, 47-48, 50, 54.

⁸⁸Nethercot, The Last Four Lives, pp. 105-8.

⁸⁹Ibid., pp. 109, 111, 116-17.

⁹⁰Ibid., pp. 119-21.

⁹¹Ibid., pp. 127-28. It is possible that the idea of the World-Teacher identified with the Christ or Lord

Maitreya originated with Leadbeater, but Besant became the primary publicizer of the anticipated coming of the World-Teacher. Tillett suggests that the identification of the Christ and the Buddhist Lord Maitreya may have come from the rituals of an obscure fraternity, the Sat B'hai, founded by an Anglo-Indian. Blavatsky, Olcott, and James Wedgwood (Leadbeater's close associate) were honorary members. See Tillett, pp.106-7.

⁹²Nethercot, The Last Four Lives, p. 144.

⁹³Mary Lutyens, Krishnamurti: The Years of Awakening (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1975), pp. 27-28, 33-39.

⁹⁴Ibid., pp. 23-24; Annie Besant and C. W. Leadbeater, The Lives of Alcyone, 2 vols. (Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1924); Annie Besant and C. W. Leadbeater, Man: Whence, How and Whither (Chicago: The Theosophical Press, 1922).

⁹⁵Lutyens, The Years of Awakening, p. 28; Nethercot, The Last Four Lives, pp. 151-53; Alcyone [J. Krishnamurti], At the Feet of the Master, 1st American ed. (Chicago: The Rajput Press, 1911).

⁹⁶Nethercot, The Last Four Lives, p. 160.

⁹⁷Ibid., p. 161.

⁹⁸Ibid., pp. 161-63.

⁹⁹Ibid., p. 163.

¹⁰⁰Ibid., pp. 184-90.

¹⁰¹Ibid., pp. 190-91.

¹⁰²Ibid., pp. 198-200.

¹⁰³Ibid., pp. 230, 249; Lutyens, The Years of Awakening, pp. 99, 101-2, 104, 108, 110.

¹⁰⁴Nethercot, The Last Four Lives, p. 217.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., pp. 222-24.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., pp. 232, 237.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., pp. 255-56.

¹⁰⁸Annie Besant, "The League of Young Nations," New India (Madras), 21 February 1921, p. 6; Annie Besant, "The Unification of the Scout Movement in India," New India (Madras), 14 March 1921, p. 6; Annie Besant, "The School Boy as Citizen," New India (Madras), 20 September 1923, p. 3; Annie Besant, "The Call to Youth," New India (Madras), 14 November 1923, p. 3.

¹⁰⁹H. F. Owen, "Towards Nation-Wide Agitation and Organisation: The Home Rule Leagues, 1915-18," in Soundings in South Asian History, ed. D. A. Low (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), p. 160.

¹¹⁰Ibid., pp. 166, 170, 182-84.

¹¹¹Nethercot, The Last Four Lives, pp. 244-46.

¹¹²Ibid., pp. 247-53, 259-62; Owen, pp. 174, 176.

¹¹³Nethercot, The Last Four Lives, pp. 264-65; Owen, pp. 176-77.

¹¹⁴Nethercot, The Last Four Lives, pp. 267, 269-71.

¹¹⁵Ibid., pp. 271-74.

¹¹⁶Ibid., pp. 278-80.

¹¹⁷Ibid., p. 281-82.

¹¹⁸Ibid., pp. 283-90, 301-2.

¹¹⁹Ibid., pp. 289-90.

¹²⁰Ibid., p. 295.

¹²¹Ibid., pp. 296-97.

¹²²Ibid., pp. 297-98.

¹²³Ibid., pp. 299, 301-2.

¹²⁴Ibid., p. 303.

¹²⁵Ibid., pp. 330-36, 339.

¹²⁶Annie Besant, "The National Convention: Dominion Home Rule for India," New India (Madras), 5 June 1924, p. 3; Annie Besant, "The National Convention: Dominion Status for India," New India (Madras), 9 August 1924, p. 3.

¹²⁷Nethercot, The Last Four Lives, pp. 350-52.

¹²⁸*Ibid.*, p. 358.

¹²⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 358-60.

¹³⁰*Ibid.*, p. 400.

¹³¹*Ibid.*, p. 401.

¹³²*Ibid.*, p. 413.

¹³³*Ibid.*, pp. 413-14.

¹³⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 414-16.

¹³⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 422, 468-69.

¹³⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 307-8; Lutyens, The Years of Awakening, pp. 205-6.

¹³⁷Nethercot, The Last Four Lives, pp. 309.

¹³⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 309-11.

¹³⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 317-26.

¹⁴⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 341-43; Lutyens, The Years of Awakening, pp. 152-88, 193-94; Mary Lutyens, Krishnamurti: The Years of Fulfillment (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1983), p. 12. Pupul Jayakar, in Krishnamurti: A Biography, (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986), recounted her witnessing of this process briefly in Madras, and for three weeks in Ootacamund, India, in 1948. She reported that the process would begin about 6:00 p.m. and continue until 8:30 p.m. or sometimes until midnight. Krishnamurti would experience severe pain in the back of the neck, top of the head, and spine, and intense heat. At one moment he would behave in a very childlike manner and the next he would become very regal and imposing in appearance and manner. Witnesses reported that at these times they felt a throbbing energy in the room. On one night in Ootacamund, after a profound change

came over Krishnamurti, he stated "The Buddha was here, you are blessed." In 1961, this process was witnessed in England by Doris Pratt, and in Gstaad, Switzerland, by Signora Vanda Scaravelli. Krishnamurti explained to Jayakar that the presence of friends was necessary to protect the body while it was in such a vulnerable condition. "Where there is love there is protection. Hatred permits evil to enter." (pp. 119, 124-30, 132-33, 240-44.)

¹⁴¹Jinarajadasa, pp. 50-51.

¹⁴²Lutyens, The Years of Awakening, pp. 210-15.

¹⁴³Ibid., pp. 215, 217, 218-20.

¹⁴⁴Ibid., p. 221.

¹⁴⁵Ibid., pp. 223-24.

¹⁴⁶Ibid., p. 234.

¹⁴⁷Nethercot, The Last Four Lives, pp. 388-89.

¹⁴⁸Lutyens, The Years of Awakening, pp. 245-46.

¹⁴⁹Nethercot, The Last Four Lives, pp. 402-6.

¹⁵⁰Ibid., pp. 408-9.

¹⁵¹Ibid., pp. 409-10.

¹⁵²Ibid., p. 425.

¹⁵³Ibid., pp. 425-26.

¹⁵⁴Ibid., p. 446.

¹⁵⁵Lutyens, The Years of Awakening, pp. 283-84.

¹⁵⁶Nethercot, The Last Four Lives, pp. 452-54.

¹⁵⁷Jayakar, pp. 379, 404.

CHAPTER IV

Annie Besant's Early Thought

Late Victorian Social Conditions and Response

As a young woman, Annie Besant's questioning of her Christian faith was stimulated by the question of the meaning of suffering and why a supposedly benevolent and omnipotent God would allow suffering to exist. Her search for the answer was initially spurred by the suffering of her infant daughter, but the events of Besant's early life had been leading her to the point where this issue would be crucial for her faith. Miss Marryat had taught the importance of service to the poor, and Lawyer Roberts had pointed out that the working classes have the inherent right to live and work in clean, safe, and comfortable environments thus helping Annie move away from the paternalistic attitude towards the poor that Miss Marryat had inculcated. Besant's concern with the lot of the English working class was further stimulated by her observation of the conditions of farm laborers in her husband's parish. Besant's initial religious questioning was stimulated by personal concerns, but after leaving her husband she extended her concern for the meaning of suffering to the wider society around her, thus resulting in a great deal of practical work for the alleviation of suffering and a search for a philosophical basis for such work.

The England of Annie Besant's formative years had been undergoing a process of industrialization since the eighteenth century. The many changes that were the result of this process brought wealth to the few, increased the comfort and number of the middle-class,¹ and created poverty, overwork, squalor, and starvation for factory laborers. The enclosure of farm lands and land previously common to villagers created an

increased number of landless laborers who either remained in the country to work for wages or drifted into factory work. The condition of farm laborers varied during the nineteenth century, but bare subsistence levels of living and even starvation were not uncommon.²

Throughout the nineteenth century, the comfortable classes gradually became aware of the plight of the working classes and slowly steps were taken to prevent their exploitation. The process of reform and amelioration was spurred no doubt by the equally slow development of trade unions, but the Victorian era is noteworthy for the awakening concern of the higher classes for the condition of the working classes.³

Slowly legislation was passed limiting daily hours of work. Regulations concerning the work hours of women and children give an indication of the exploitation and misery of the working classes. In 1819 a law was passed prohibiting the employment of children under nine in cotton mills and restricting the work hours of older children to twelve a day. In 1833 another law stipulated that children between nine and thirteen years of age employed in textile factories should not work more than forty-eight hours a week. Individuals under eighteen were limited to twelve hours a day or sixty-nine hours a week. In 1847 an act limited the working day of women and persons under eighteen employed in textile mills to ten hours daily or fifty-eight hours a week. Further Factory Acts began to regulate other industries besides the textile. A Mines Act of 1842 forbade the employment of women and children underground. The sweating of women in the sewing trades was notorious, and a very belated act of 1891 limited their work day to twelve hours. In 1895

the working hours of children were limited to thirty hours a week.⁴

In addition to the long working hours, the working conditions were uncomfortable to the extreme and subjected the workers to hazardous and unhealthful conditions. Sanitary arrangements were minimal, and most factories had no ventilation, which resulted in very high temperatures. Nailmakers worked under conditions where the furnaces were their only source of light. Workers in white lead mills were poisoned by the substance they carried causing colic, epilepsy, paralysis, blindness, madness, and finally death. The matchmakers who were the beneficiaries of Annie Besant's organizational efforts were poisoned by the phosphorus used to make lucifer matches resulting in necrosis of the jawbone, teeth, and gums.⁵

The living conditions of the workers were wretched and cramped. Pauper children working in factories were housed in sheds. Large families might have to share a single room or a damp cellar.⁶

Even though attempts at reform and relief had been made throughout the nineteenth century, by the 1870's, the decade that Annie Besant began her social and political work, the lower classes were still working and living in abysmal conditions.

The poorer districts in town and country made a very ugly picture in 1870. Two-thirds of the nation had been brutalised by squalor. The other third was a pretty cake-icing that hid an unappetising mixture below.⁷

By the 1880's exposés were published revealing the condition of the poor. Charles Booth made a statistical study of conditions in London which showed that while 50 per cent of the population was living in

relative comfort, 30 per cent was forced to live below subsistence levels. General William Booth (no relation to Charles Booth) of the Salvation Army published in 1890 In Darkest England and the Way Out, which related actual cases encountered by the Salvation Army. He described men and women sleeping on the streets, and the desperate plight of prostitutes.⁸ Annie Besant wrote to describe the horribly crowded conditions in which the workers lived, and the unbearably long hours of work. One example of her sensationalist account as well as her genuine concern is seen in an article entitled "Edinburgh Slums."

Passing out from the slums into the streets of town, only a few yards separating the horror and the beauty, I felt with a vividness more intense than ever the fearful contrasts between the lots of men, and with more pressing urgency the question seemed to ring in my ears: 'Is there no remedy; must there always be rich and poor?'⁹

This intense concern for the condition of the working classes and a desire to take steps to ameliorate their suffering was a typical attitude of the more thoughtful and conscientious Victorians. While many people remained blissfully unaware of the true condition of the workers,¹⁰ others worked to expose and remedy the situation. These more concerned individuals were strong believers in the Victorian ideal of infinite human progress and were disturbed by the lack of progress and even retrogression in the lives of the working classes.¹¹ Students of the age have testified that Victorians of means suffered a "contemporary sense of moral horror"¹² or a "collective guilt"¹³ due to the

realization that the industrial system had created so much misery.

The type of people with whom Besant associated after her departure from the Church of England and her husband shared this concern to ameliorate current social conditions as well as the general Victorian belief in progress. These included atheists, agnostics, radicals, Comtists, socialists, and Christian socialists. These people

. . . gathered under the banner of Materialism; meaning, of course, that their first concern was with the betterment of people's lives on this planet, the alleviation of physical and mental anguish, the building of a better society. One finds, even within the Church, terms like 'Material Christianity' which must have seemed paradoxical to the traditional elders. Shaw, late in life, dubbed them 'World Betterers'.¹⁴

In addition to a belief in progress as well as an increasing concern to ameliorate current social conditions, the Victorian age was characterized by widespread religious questioning.

The fact of the matter is, that from the middle of the century onward, the tides of human knowledge were fast eroding the cliffs of Christian dogma. Lyell showed from his study of fossils and rocks that Creation, far from being a matter of days, was the product of millennia; Chambers, popularizing Laplace's nebular hypothesis for the origin of the universe, seemed to superannuate even a Deistic God; Darwin's Origin of Species

relegated man from angelic to ape-like status; the comparative study of religions seemed to dissolve Christianity's uniqueness by classifying it as one of the higher moral religions; and Strauss and Renan between them made of the incarnate, atoning, and risen Saviour of historic Christianity a gentle Galilean teacher unfortunately liquidated by the collusion of Jewish and Roman authorities. Not since the third decade of the eighteenth century had Christianity to face such an attack. Inevitably, then, the battle for the minds of men was fought in the pulpits and the lecture-rooms. Only a supremely confident dogmatism or a lily-livered cowardice would have evaded the central intellectual issues of the day.¹⁵

Scientific discoveries and theories were not only bringing traditional dogmas into question, but increasingly people began to feel that the current social problems could be solved through scientific means. Annie Besant's contemporary, Beatrice Webb, an outstanding member of the Fabian Society, testified to the importance of the belief in science as the means to solving human problems.

There was a current belief in the scientific method, in that intellectual synthesis of observation and experiment, hypothesis and verification, by means of which alone all mundane problems were to be solved. And added to this belief in science was the consciousness of a new motive: the transference of the emotion of self-sacrificing service from God to man.¹⁶

Science was a very strong interest of Annie Besant throughout her adult life. As an atheist she felt that scientific reform would be the means of solving human problems. She believed that religious faith should be replaced by scientific study. She studied natural science at the London University, and retained her interest in science after becoming a Theosophist, at which point she concluded that science and religion were not necessarily antagonistic. The transference of the emotion of self-sacrifice from God to humanity will be seen in Besant's atheistic thought. Her belief that service and self-sacrifice should be directed toward humanity rather than toward an unknown and illogical God is just one part of the philosophy that Besant adopted as an atheist to answer her question concerning the meaning of suffering and to provide a rationale for social action. The beliefs that Besant held as an atheist contained a number of elements that would be conducive to her later millenarianism.

Millenarian Trends in Besant's Atheism

Initial Questioning--Concern with Suffering

Annie Besant's religious questioning that caused her to make the jump from Christianity, briefly to theism, and then to atheism was initially spurred to a great extent by the general climate of doubt and scepticism of the late nineteenth century. However, it is significant that her search for religious certainty was initiated by questioning the meaning of suffering. Beginning with a search for the reason of her baby's suffering, the answers that she settled on would extend

her concern to the suffering of the English working classes. This concern to ameliorate current social conditions and a belief in the inevitability of progress would increasingly lead Besant to millenarianism.

In the preface to her book, My Path to Atheism, Besant listed three incidents that led her to begin to critically test all Christian dogmas. The first was her compilation of a harmony of the gospels that pointed out discrepancies. "A thorough knowledge of the Bible is the groundwork of heresy." She managed to suppress her doubts until the publicity surrounding the trial of Rev. Voysey for heresy made her recall her own questions. Finally, the severe illness of her baby daughter "brought a sharper questioning as to the reason of suffering and the reality of the love of God."¹⁷

Besant resolved never to say "I believe" until she had tested each doctrine for herself. She inquired into the doctrines of the Atonement, eternal punishment, the special inspiration of Christian scripture, and the deity of Jesus. In doing so she read Maurice, Robertson, Stopford Brooke, McLeod, Campbell, Charles Voysey, Theodore Parker, and Channing, in addition to some reading on Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism.¹⁸ She gave up belief in the necessity of atonement, eternal punishment in hell, the deity of Jesus, and concluded that inspiration was not confined to Christian scripture alone.¹⁹ Besant next tackled the issue of the nature and existence of God. At this time Besant considered herself to be a theist but not a Christian. In the process of writing the article in which she examined these issues, she came to conclusions that pushed her into atheism.

So while Besant at this time was very much caught up in the contemporary mode of questioning Christian doctrines, it was significant for her subsequent millenarianism that this questioning was spurred by a concern to find a reason for suffering. Initially, Besant was concerned only with why a supposedly benevolent God would allow her innocent baby to suffer, but through her widening contact with the English working class her concern with suffering widened its scope. Besant's interest in ameliorating current social conditions as it was manifested in her careers as an atheist and socialist would increasingly lead her to adopt a millenarian faith, specifically a progressive messianism, which provided an understanding of current social conditions and the manner in which they would be resolved.

Monism

The monistic point of view to which Annie Besant was attracted answered her question concerning suffering and prepared her to accept Theosophy as soon as she read Blavatsky's The Secret Doctrine. In examining the nature and existence of God, Besant found that she was very drawn to pantheism, but while associated with Bradlaugh and other atheists she opted instead for monistic materialism. Besant's early indecision concerning pantheism and materialism should be carefully examined, for although monism is not necessary for millenarian belief, it is the philosophical basis for the millenarianism of Besant's later thought.

In "On the Nature and Existence of God" Besant first made some definitions.

Matter is used to express that which is tangible. Spirit (or spiritual) is used to express those intangible forces whose existence we become aware of only through the effects they produce. Substance is used to express that which exists in itself and by itself, and the conception of which does not imply the conception of anything preceding it. God is used to represent exclusively that Being invested by the orthodox with certain physical, intellectual, and moral attributes.²⁰

Besant went on to state that "Matter is, in its constituent elements, the same as spirit; existence is one, however manifold in its phenomena. . . ." ²¹ Besant then wrote that she believed that there was only one substance, that the universe was eternal, and that God was inextricably entwined with the universe or the one substance.²²

God is infinite; then, in that case, everything that exists is God; all phenomena are modes of the Divine Being; there is literally nothing which is not God. Will the orthodox accept this position? It lands them, it is true, in the most extreme Pantheism, but what of that? They believe in an "infinite God" and they are therefore necessarily Pantheists.²³

Besant quoted extensively from Dean Mansel's Bampton Lectures of 1867 to support her pantheistic position and the conclusions she drew from it.

'Here again the Pantheistic hypothesis seems forced upon us. We can think of creation only as a change in the condition of that

which already exists, and thus the creature is conceivable only as a phenomenal mode of the being of the Creator.'²⁴

Quoting further from Dean Mansel, Besant wrote:

'If it is actually everything, it possesses no characteristic feature by which it can be distinguished from anything else and discerned as an object of consciousness.' I think, then, that we must be content, on the showing of Dr. Mansel, to allow that God is, in his own nature--from this point of view--quite beyond the grasp of our faculties; as regards us he does not exist, since he is indistinguishable and undiscernable.²⁵

This is where Annie Besant stepped over into the atheistic camp. She started from a pantheistic position saying that God was the one substance of the universe. She quoted Theodore Parker as saying that God was "the materiality of matter, as well as the spirituality of spirit." God as the one substance eliminated the possibility of a separate, personal creator God.²⁶ Since human beings had no faculty by which to discern God from the world around them, for practical purposes God did not exist for humanity. At this early stage in her thought Besant was optimistic that at some point humans would be able to perceive God.

It seems to me that to deny his existence is to overstep the boundaries of our thought-power almost as much as to try and define it. We pretend to know the unknown if we declare Him to be the Unknowable. Unknowable to us at present, yes! Unknowable forever, in other possible stages of existence?--We have

reached a region into which we cannot penetrate; here all human faculties fail us; we bow our heads on 'the threshold of the unknown.'²⁷

As a more confirmed atheist Besant would hold more strongly to the notion that God was unknowable. Eventually, however, she would be persuaded to the Theosophical teaching that faculties could be developed by which God could be perceived and she would adopt a more favorable and more detailed view of intuition.

The definition of atheism to which Annie Besant and Charles Bradlaugh subscribed was not that there was no God but that the atheist was without God, i.e., without a conception of God.²⁸

The Atheist does not say "There is no God," but he says, "I know not what you mean by God; I am without idea of God; the word 'God' is to me a sound conveying no clear or distinct affirmation. I do not deny God, because I cannot deny that of which I have no conception, and the conception of which, by its affirmer, is so imperfect that he is unable to define it to me."²⁹

In her atheistic writings, Besant stated that although the majority of the peoples of the world believed in God, a growing, intelligent minority had given up this belief. She felt that this minority should speak out on this subject without fear of approbation from the majority. She wrote that the burden of proof rested with the affirmer of God's existence. Since the atheist did not deny the existence of God, the burden of proof did not rest with him. Atheists did not assert a universal negative, but they only denied the God which has been described by

others. Since these descriptions were "palpably self-contradictory and absurd" it was not difficult for the atheist to prove them wrong.³⁰

In the midst of all her denials of the various descriptions of God, however, Besant still slipped in a brief statement of faith that everything in the universe was a mode of God.

And so while I refuse to say 'there is no God', lacking the knowledge which would justify the denial, since to me the word God represents no concept, I do say, 'there is no infinite personality, there is no infinite creator, there is no being at once almighty and all-good, there is no Trinity in Unity, there is no eternal and infinite existence save that of which each one of us is a mode'. For be it noted, these denials are justified by our knowledge: an undefined 'God' might be a limited being on the far side of Sirius, and I have no knowledge which justifies me in denying such an existence; but an infinite God, *i.e.*, a God who is everywhere, who has no limits, and yet who is not I and who is therefore limited by my personality, is a being who is self-contradictory, both limited and not-limited, and such a being cannot exist.³¹

Charles Bradlaugh agreed with the point of view that there was only one substance or one existence and that a God defined as something apart from the one existence was untrue. In the Freethinker's Textbook he had his hypothetical atheist state:

If, however, God is affirmed to represent an existence which is distinct from the exis-

tence of which I am a mode, and which it is alleged is not the noumenon, of which the word 'I' represents only a speciality of phenomena, then I deny 'God,' and affirm that it is impossible 'God' can be. That is, I affirm that there is one existence, and deny that there can be more than one.³²

John M. Robertson stated that Bradlaugh derived this conception of the one substance or existence from Spinoza. Robertson quoted Bradlaugh:

The Logic of Spinoza was directed to the demonstration of one substance with infinite attributes, for which one substance with infinite attributes he had as equivalent the name of 'God.'³³

So it can be seen that both Bradlaugh and Besant were attracted to monism or the idea of one substance. Bradlaugh could speak approvingly of pantheism as being more logical than theism, but he ultimately opted for a materialistic point of view. Although Robertson stated that Bradlaugh preferred to be called a monist rather than a materialist, and never said that dead matter gave rise to life,³⁴ this was exactly what Bradlaugh said in his pamphlet Has Man a Soul? He believed that life arose as the result of a certain combination or organization of matter, and when the proper physical combination was disrupted, life disappeared. There was no soul or ego that continued after death.

To say that the Ego is not there, and if not there must be elsewhere, is to use an absurd phrase. Take an ordinary drinking-glass and crush it into powder, or shatter it into fragments, the drinking-glass is not there, nor is it elsewhere; the combination which

made up drinking-glass no longer exists. Ego does not denote body only, it denotes living body with personal characteristics. Take a bright steel blade, let the surface be oxidised, and the brightness is no longer there, nor is it elsewhere; it is only that the conditions which were resultant in brightness no longer exist.³⁵

Besant's writings show that she was very attracted to the pantheistic point of view and she showed great indecision as to whether or not the one substance was living, conscious, and intelligent. While associated with Bradlaugh and other atheists she opted for the materialistic point of view. Toward the end of her career as a Freethinker she would become more pre-occupied with questions dealing with psychology and psychic phenomena, and she found that materialism did not provide answers satisfactory to her. Her early approval of pantheism would eventually lead Besant to Theosophy which was a kind of non-theistic Viśiṣṭādvaita, or qualified nondualism. As a Theosophist and a student of Indian literature, Besant would use Indian works such as the Upaniṣads and the Bhagavad-Gītā to support her monism. In 1886 she expressed some familiarity with eastern thought, although her account was not entirely accurate.

The answers of the various religions of the world are all of the nature of guesses, and are unsupported by proven fact. Hinduism says that all life is an emanation from the divine existence; the creative power is ever emitting, ever reabsorbing, individual lives; it alone is; all else is maya, illusion. Hence the reverence shown to all living

things by the Brahmin; he will not slay the lowest creature, since it shares with him the divine essence, and all the forms with which the deity clothes itself are sacred.

Buddhism sees life as a state of unrest, each individual life passing through a circle of changes so long as it continues imperfect; the life rises through stage after stage, or if unworthy in one stage it is degraded to a lower for its next probation; at length, becoming perfect, it passes into Nirvana, is absorbed into the All. To escape from life's unrest, from the circle of existence, is the aim of the Buddhist philosopher; the unruffled serenity of unconsciousness is his goal; the loss of the One in the All is the hope on which his world-weary eyes are fixed. These mystic Oriental religions are profoundly Pantheistic; one Life pulsing through all living things; one existence bodying itself forth in all individual existences; such is the common ground of those mighty religions which number among their adherents the vast majority of human kind. And in this magnificent conception they are in accord with modern science; the philosopher and the poet, with the far-reaching glance of genius, caught sight of the unity of all things, 'the One in the Many' of Plato, a belief which it is the glory of modern science to have placed upon the sure foundation of ascertained fact.³⁶

Even though Besant wrote appreciatively of Hinduism and Buddhism above, she concluded in this

essay that the various world religions could not prove their assertions so it was better to turn to Science, and she went on to speak disparagingly of Judaism and Christianity. Despite her appreciative remarks on pantheism in the above quote, in this essay Besant went on to espouse a strict materialistic point of view. She approvingly quoted a scientist's statement that was very similar to Bradlaugh's view saying that life resulted from certain conditions being present in matter.

Life is not a contrast to non-living nature, but a further development of it. The more knowledge advances the more plainly is it shown that there are physical and chemical processes upon which life depends.³⁷

Therefore Besant concluded that it was meaningless to ask "Where does life go at death?" Once the certain arrangement of matter which produced life changed sufficiently, death occurred. "A result 'goes' nowhere when its cause is no longer present, it simply ceases."³⁸

The monistic position solved the question of human suffering for Besant. She condemned the conception of a theistic God since he "invented the struggle for existence, and looks on unmoved at the immense misery of the world when he might by a word turn all its mourning into joy."³⁹ The monistic position eliminated the separate Creator-God who for unknown reasons created a universe full of suffering. In her atheistic stance the question of the nature of God became irrelevant since God could not be perceived, and in materialism the existence of a universal life or consciousness was denied. As a Theosophist, Besant's monism would continue to explain the cause of suffering for

her. Theosophy teaches that there is no God outside the universe looking unmoved at suffering, but it is the one God or consciousness within creation who is experiencing suffering. Suffering is one of the means of furthering progressive evolution and is bound up with the law of karma.

Although monism is not a necessary component of millenarianism, in Besant's case monism would become the philosophical basis of her millenarianism. Once all persons had the perception that all were part of a unity, then the millenarian goal of brotherhood would be accomplished.

Interest in Forming a New Religion

As an atheist Besant clearly transferred her love and desire to serve from God to humanity as a whole, and was very attracted to the idea of a new religion devoted to the service of humanity. Besant and Bradlaugh spent a great deal of time and energy attacking and ridiculing Christian dogma. For Bradlaugh, Christianity must be attacked because of its grip on the public mind, which prohibited the freedom of the individual to exercise his own judgment and thought.⁴⁰ While Besant certainly agreed with this point of view, for her there was an additional reason for the attack on Christianity. She believed that Christianity must be destroyed by science and rational criticism so that a new religion of humanity could replace it. Humanity would be worshipped since there was no agreement on the nature of God.

While theologians are wrangling about God,
plain men are looking wistfully over the

shattered idols to find the ideal to which they can cling. The new religion, then, studying the varying phases of the God-idea, seizes on its one permanent element, its idealised resemblance to man, its embodiment of the highest humanity; and, grasping this thought, it turns to men and says, 'In loving God you are only loving your own highest selves; in conforming yourselves to the Divine image you are only conforming yourselves to your own highest ideals; the unknown God whom you ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you; in serving your family, your neighbors, your country, you serve this unknown God; this God is humanity. . . .'41

Prior to becoming involved with Charles Bradlaugh and Freethought, Besant had been very interested in the thought of Auguste Comte (1798-1857) which was very influential in Great Britain in the last three decades of the nineteenth century. In fact, Besant picked up her first copy of The National Reformer while in a bookshop looking for Comtist literature. In many ways the thought of Comte would have a lifelong influence on Besant, particularly in sparking her interest in creating a new religion devoted to the service of humanity.

Comte's goal was the "redemption and regeneration of humanity" by a complete reorganization of society.⁴² His view of history was progressive. Comte's philosophy was based on two propositions, the Law of the Three Stages and the Classification of the Sciences. The Law of the Three Stages stated that human mentality developed

. . . from a first, theological stage in which it explained the world in terms of the will of anthropomorphic gods, by way of a second in which it explained the world in terms of metaphysical abstractions to a third and final, positive stage in which it explained the world in terms of scientific truth.⁴³

According to Comte, each discipline of knowledge must go through these stages. His Classification of the Sciences ordered the scientific disciplines from the most general to the most complex and interdependent, i.e., mathematics, astronomy, physics, chemistry, biology, and sociology. Comte felt that biology had just reached the positive stage and that his own work was the means of bringing sociology into the positive stage. Once the final science was positive, a philosophy could be constructed based on all the sciences. The purpose of philosophy was to serve humanity and hence the importance of sociology in enabling the philosopher to understand humanity.⁴⁴

After Comte became involved with Clotilde de Vaux, he felt that he had a better appreciation of the power of love and emotions. Consequently, he constructed a "Religion of Humanity" which would be the means of reorganizing society. He himself occupied the position of the first High Priest of the Religion of Humanity. He set out a very detailed plan for the ordering of society and his new religion, which included a new calendar with the months and weeks named for great benefactors of humanity and a system of holidays honoring these benefactors.⁴⁵

Prominent English positivists were Richard Congreve, E. S. Beesley, J. H. Bridges, and Frederic

Harrison. These men involved themselves in political and social issues, and they were often found working closely with the Freethinkers on behalf of the same causes. Only Richard Congreve attempted to fulfill the requirements that Comte had set forth for a priest of Humanity, i.e., to be a man of science as well as to facilitate the worship of Humanity. The purpose of the worship of the deified Humanity was to promote a desire to serve Humanity.⁴⁶

While Besant was greatly attracted to Comte's idea of a "New Religion" devoted to the service of humanity and his motto, "Vivre pour autrui," she rejected the Religion of Humanity as set forth by Comte as being

. . . noble in its scope, but childish in its details; grand in its aspirations, but puerile in its petty directions. To live after all Comte's rules would be to live in leading strings, with no possibility of freedom of action, nor of vigour of development.⁴⁷

Although Besant rejected Comte's specific plan for the new religion of humanity, she was still very interested in formulating such a religion. Following Comte, Besant felt that the purpose in worshipping Humanity was to provide a motive for service to humanity as a whole. Also like Comte, she felt that scientific study would replace revelation, that scientific books would replace the Bible and "by the study of the laws of health, both physical, moral, and mental, the Rationalist will ascertain the conditions which surround him to which he must conform himself if he desires to retain physical, moral, and mental vigour."⁴⁸

The following chapters will show that Besant continued to be captivated by the idea of a "new

religion" the purpose of which was to serve and worship humanity and that this would become an important element in her progressive messianism.

Belief in Progress

In her early thought as in her later, Besant was an implicit believer in the doctrine of progress that was so widespread in the Victorian era. Besant believed that Nature was progressive and that human righteousness consisted of the shaping of oneself to the laws of Nature's progress.

For righteousness is nothing more than obedience to law and where there is obedience to law, Nature's mighty forces lend their strength to man, and progress is secured. Only by obedience to law can advance be made, and this rule applies, of course, to morality as well as physics.⁴⁹

A belief in progress does not necessarily have to result in millenarian belief, but it has been demonstrated that these ideas are closely related. In the nineteenth century there was much overlap between millenarianism and a belief in progress, and in the case of Annie Besant, her belief in progress would lead her to espouse a very explicit millenarianism in the form of progressive messianism in her later years as a Theosophist.

Besant's early faith in progress contained certain elements that Bury pointed out were typical of the late nineteenth-century faith in progress. He stated that in the 1870's and 1880's a belief in progress entailed a sense of duty to posterity as well as to the present. The utilitarian ethic was extended to include future

generations.⁵⁰ As an atheist Besant's belief in progress demonstrated a strong concern for posterity. She criticized the theist whose desire for personal perfection "is self-centered; each righteous individual is righteous, as it were, alone, and his righteousness does not benefit his fellows save as it may make him helpful and loving in his dealings with them."⁵¹ Conversely, the atheist sought personal perfection in order to benefit posterity.

Not dreaming of a personal reward hereafter, not craving a personal payment from a heavenly treasury, he [the atheist] works and loves, content that he is building a future fairer than his present, joyous that he is creating a new earth for a happier race.⁵²

Besant felt that service of humanity and therefore posterity was a greater reward than the orthodox hope of a life in heaven after death. For the atheist immortality was gained by being remembered for contributions made to the improvement of the future. Besant found this point of view much more positive than the concept of eternal damnation and the pre-millenarian doctrine of decline.

Thus is our work full of hope; no terrible will of God have we to struggle against; no despairful future to look forward to, of a world growing more and more evil, until it is, at last, to be burned up; but a glad fair future of an ever-rising race, where more equal laws, more general education, more just division, shall eradicate pauperism, destroy ignorance, nourish independence, a future to be made the grander by our struggles, a future to be made the nearer by our toil.⁵³

In her essay marking the transition from theism to atheism, Besant clearly stated that the goal was to achieve "a heaven attainable on earth."⁵⁴ Later as a more avowed atheist or rationalist she would make the same statement.

To the Rationalist, the future of the race replaces in thought the future of the individual; for that he thinks, for that he plans, for that he labours. A heaven upon earth for those who come after him, such is his inspiration to effort and self-devotion.⁵⁵

In order to further this goal of a heaven on earth, utility would become the new standard for morality. Morality should no longer be determined by supposedly divine revelations. The Rationalist was guided in morality by a desire for the greatest good for the greatest number of people.

For man's happiness is on earth, and can be known and understood; the promotion of that happiness is an intelligible aim; the test of morality can be applied to everyone; it is a system which everybody can understand, and which the common sense of each must approve, for by it man lives for man, man labours for man, the efforts of each are directed to the good of all, and only in the happiness of the whole can the happiness of each part be perfected and complete.⁵⁶

Bury also pointed out that another element of the doctrine of progress was a belief in the solidarity of peoples.⁵⁷ A notable example was the statement of Prince Albert concerning the London Exhibition of 1851 in which he said that he was living in a period "of

most wonderful transition, which tends rapidly to accomplish the great end to which all history points--the realisation of the unity of mankind."⁵⁸ Progress meant not only better transportation and communication between peoples, but more importantly, growth of brotherhood. The present examination of Besant's early thought shows that the concept of the solidarity of peoples or brotherhood was central to her thought. Having rejected a belief in a theistic God she replaced it with a desire to serve humanity. Following Comte, she was interested in the idea of forming a religion to worship Humanity in order to bring about better service to humanity. Her monistic view of the world, which for the time being was materialistic, was the basis of her belief in the essential unity of humanity. Later as a Theosophist, she would shift to a form of pantheism that would be the basis of her belief in the unity and brotherhood of all human beings. The goal of her later millenarian activities would be to actualize this brotherhood in the world.

Besant's atheistic remarks indicating her concern for posterity, the implementation of the utilitarian ethic, and the achievement of a new heaven on earth demonstrate that as an atheist she was interested in the accomplishment of a collective and terrestrial salvation, the basic concern of the millenarian. Although Bradlaugh was not so specific concerning a new heaven on earth, his point of view was basically the same. He, too, was working for a collective salvation on earth.

The teaching of Jesus is, in fact, save yourself by yourself. The teaching of humanity should be, to save yourself save your fellow. The human family is a vast

chain, each man and woman a link. There is no snapping off one link and preserving for it, isolated from the rest, an entirety of happiness; our joy depends on our brother's also.⁵⁹

To this effect, the principles of Bradlaugh's National Secular Society pledged the member to seek to promote "the improvement and happiness of mankind" by ensuring that each individual was well educated and suitably employed. In order to work effectively for the general good, the Secularist ("one who deduces his moral duties from consideration which pertain to this life") promised to attack all barriers to freedom of thought and speech upon political, theological, and social subjects.⁶⁰ Besant found these principles attractive before meeting Bradlaugh, and since they harmonized with her own views she decided to join the National Secular Society.

In the practical attempt to achieve a more perfect world, Besant adopted wholesale Bradlaugh's political and social views. Bradlaugh was "a republican, a land reformer, an advocate of the women's vote, a liberal internationalist, a fearless champion of free speech, a firm opponent of coercion in Ireland and a supporter of Irish Home Rule."⁶¹ In addition, he supported the necessity of promulgating information on birth control, and he was in favor of trades unions to secure workers' rights. Bradlaugh initiated Besant into the world of practical politics and propaganda. She wrote and lectured energetically and effectively on the topics listed above. She wrote a pamphlet advocating English Republicanism, and in Landlords, Tenant Farmers, and Laborers and in The English Land System she argued that land presently held by the aristocracy should be

nationalized and leased directly to the farmers who worked the land. She wrote several pamphlets on the legal rights of women, including The Political Status of Women which was the text of her first public lecture. She wrote pamphlets criticizing British imperialism in Afghanistan and in other countries, and she was critical of the Boer War. She, too, was in favor of Home Rule in Ireland and spoke out strongly against the use of coercion in Ireland. She wrote a history of The Trades Union Movement, and this was but a preface to her more active work with trades unions. Bradlaugh had always advocated neo-Malthusianism, but it was Besant who persuaded him to make the Knowlton pamphlet a test case. In her own pamphlet on birth control, The Law of Population, she argued strongly that free access to information on birth control was vital to the alleviation of poverty.⁶²

Thus Besant's belief in progress resulted in a desire for a collective salvation that manifested in much practical work for the amelioration of current social conditions. Besant's belief in progress entailed many elements typical of the nineteenth century faith in progress including a concern for posterity, a belief in the solidarity of humankind, and reliance on utilitarianism as a guide to moral conduct. These concerns show that Besant's atheistic thought contained elements basic to millenarianism, a desire for a collective and terrestrial salvation, or "a heaven on earth."

Summary

Annie Besant's atheistic thought contained important elements that would continue into her later and more explicitly millenarian thought. First and foremost was a strong desire for a collective salvation on earth manifested in her desire to ameliorate current social conditions. Besant was willing to undertake whatever work she felt was necessary to accomplish this salvation. Additionally, Besant was a believer in the prevailing doctrine of progress, and this faith in progress stayed with her throughout her life and prevented her millenarianism from evincing any reliance on catastrophic change. However, there is no evidence in Besant's atheistic thought of a belief in superhuman agencies that would bring about the desired change on earth. This is an essential element of millenarianism, and the first step toward belief in superhuman agencies will be seen in Besant's socialistic thought.

Monism is by no means a necessary component of millenarianism, but in Annie Besant's thought a monistic view of the universe was the philosophical basis of her millenarian dream. Upon rejecting Christian doctrines and theism, Besant found herself very attracted to pantheism, but instead settled on a materialistic stance. Later she would question materialism and switch to pantheism. Her earlier monistic materialism prepared her to accept Theosophy which postulates one spiritual unity of which the manifested material universe is a part. For Besant, if all persons were part of the one unity, then her millenarian goal of true brotherhood on earth could be accomplished.

The desire to found a new religion the goal of which was to serve humanity was an important theme in Besant's millenarian thought. She was attracted to the concept of a new religion in the thought of Auguste Comte, but rejected his formula as too stiff and rigid. The desire to found a new religion stayed with her during her career as atheist and it would show up again in a more concrete form in the Law and Liberty League toward the end of her career as socialist. Theosophy contains elements that would prove attractive to Besant's desire to found a new religion which would culminate in her creation of a progressive messianic movement.

Millenarian Trends in Besant's Socialism

Although Bradlaugh was vehemently opposed to socialism, many atheists/secularists/radicals, including Annie Besant, began to see socialism as being the best means of bringing about the kinds of social changes for which they had been working. In "Why I Am a Socialist," published in 1886, Besant listed three reasons for her conversion.

- I. I am a Socialist because I am a believer in Evolution.⁶³
- II. I am a Socialist because of the failure of our present civilisation.⁶⁴
- III. I am a Socialist because the poverty of the workers is, and must continue to be, an integral part of the present method of wealth-production and wealth-distribution.⁶⁵

Numbers II and III were closely related to each other and indicated a continued desire to ameliorate

current social conditions. Number II referred to the poverty and bleak living conditions created by industrialism. Besant pointed out that in her day most socialists in England were members of the "comfortable classes" who saw the injustice of the existing economic system. Number III was a more technical analysis of the economic situation from the socialist perspective. The privileged classes controlled the land and capital, and the only means the proletarian had to subsist was to sell his labor. Besant pointed out that the use of machinery which should have eased the worker's lot, had instead benefited only the owners.⁶⁶

The faith in evolution to which Besant referred in Number I related to her belief in progress. Articles and letters previously published in The National Reformer had discussed the merits of pantheism over materialism,⁶⁷ and beginning in 1886 Besant's own statements began to show a shift from a materialistic to a more pantheistic monism. She wrote that Darwin, Huxley, Haeckel, and Büchner had shown the evolution of the "one Life" in the natural sciences. Besant was familiar with the budding science of sociology which at that time was interested in the evolutionary stages of human society. She pointed out that sociology had traced the evolution of society "from the embryonic state of barbarism, through nomad life to settled order, through tribes to nation, through feudalism to industrialism, through industrialism to--Nowhither? Evolution complete?" Of course the next stage was socialism. She felt that so far the progress of evolution in society had been "from individualistic anarchy to associated order; from universal unrestricted competition to competition regulated and

restrained by law, and even to partial cooperation in lieu thereof."⁶⁸

In another essay, Besant wrote that society was an organism which evolved in a manner similar to the way the lowest forms of life became more complex. Her many references in her writings to Herbert Spencer show that she was familiar with his work, and this concept that societies are systems analogous to organisms may have been derived from him.⁶⁹

As the lowest forms of life consist of simple independent cells, as these cells become grouped, differentiated, integrated into tissues, as these tissues become more complex in arrangement, more co-ordinated, in the highest organisms, so, it is argued, do the individual human units become grouped into families and tribes, integrated into a social organism, of which the multiplicity of the composing elements is the measure of its adaptability, the unity and the correlation thereof the measure of its strength.⁷⁰

Therefore anything that promoted integration of the organism of society was life-giving, and anything that promoted disintegration would cause death.

Judging the future by the past we shall be prepared to look forward to the realisation of a fuller social unity than has yet been reached, and to recognise that by an inexorable necessity Society must either integrate yet further, or must begin a movement which will result in its resolution into its elements.⁷¹

There has always existed in society a conflict between integrating and disintegrating forces, or between

"social and anti-social tendencies." The struggle for survival on an individual basis has been modified among "the social animals, and savage man, as the highest of these. . . ."72

As Society progressed slowly in civilisation, the contest went on between the surviving brutal, or savage, desire for personal accumulation and personal aggrandisement without regard for others, and the social desire for general prosperity and happiness with the readiness to subordinate the individual for the collective good.⁷³

Besant saw this conflict still going on, particularly in the laissez-faire attitudes of the Industrial Period. The desire for the accumulation of great personal wealth led to the employment of women and children in mines under frightful conditions, the overwork of women and children in factories thus driving men out of employment, the control of agricultural lands by the aristocracy so that the farmers had no control over the land they worked, and slumlords who forced city workers to live in abhorrent conditions.⁷⁴ These anti-social tendencies could only be curbed by legislation. She saw integrative tendencies in the co-operative stores and communities run by the followers of Robert Owen, and the public pressure for tax-supported schools and shorter work hours. She felt that the fact that these changes were being brought about by legislation and not revolution was a very significant social tendency.⁷⁵ This illustrates that Besant's brand of socialism was not revolutionary. She urged that the desire for the accumulation of a large amount of wealth be recognized as a survival of the

animal instincts, instead being praised under terms such as "business ability," "sharpness," "energy."⁷⁶

Besant saw the socialist movement itself, which consisted mostly of members of the middle-class, as a significant social tendency which proved that humanity was evolving toward brotherhood and unselfishness.

And this very outburst of human brotherhood is in itself a proof that society is evolving Socialismwards, and that the evolution of humanity is reaching a stage in which sympathy is triumphing over selfishness, and the desire for equality of happiness is becoming a potent factor in human conduct. The Socialist ideal is one which could not meet with wide acceptance if humanity were not marching towards its realisation.⁷⁷

Finally, Besant concluded that despite the struggle between the tendencies of integration and disintegration, the evolution towards socialism was inevitable.

But this one thing I know, that come it will, whether men work for it or hinder; for all the mighty, silent forces of evolution make for Socialism, for the establishment of the Brotherhood of Man.⁷⁸

On a practical basis, Besant worked for state ownership of land which was to be managed by the municipalities and local boards which would rent it out.⁷⁹ She suggested that each trade form a Trade Union to regulate its own industry. The various Trade Unions would communicate with one another through representation on a central Industrial Board.⁸⁰ Her work on behalf of trade unions has been described in the biographical chapter. She advocated legislation to

shorten the work day, to create sanitary and pleasant working conditions, and to prevent pollution of the environment by industry.⁸¹ She was elected a member of the London School Board, and her accomplishments in that regard have already been described.

Thus, in addition to continued practical efforts to achieve a collective salvation on earth, Besant's socialism marked the addition of elements to her thought that would shortly lead to her Theosophical millenarianism. An important step toward belief in a superhuman agent, which is a crucial element in millenarianism, is seen in Besant's statement of belief in inexorable evolution that will bring about the socialistic state irrespective of human actions. She was not specific in her description of evolution, and the "mighty, silent forces of evolution" may have meant a superhuman force operating to achieve a teleological purpose in history, or this phrase may have simply meant the operation of laws of nature that will produce the socialistic state without any overseeing, superhuman agency being present. However, this statement marks a first step toward belief in a superhuman agency since it takes the achievement of the perfect world condition out of human hands. Additionally, Besant took an important step toward Theosophy when she spoke of the "one Life" evolving in a matter, thus marking a movement away from materialism. The monistic view of Theosophy would be the philosophical basis of Besant's millenarianism. As a socialist Besant described her vision of the millennium as follows:

Whither is Society evolving? It is evolving towards a more highly developed individuality of its units, and towards their closer co-ordination. It is evolving towards

a more generous brotherhood, a more real equality, a fuller liberty. It is evolving towards that Golden Age which poets have chanted, which dreamers have visioned, which martyrs have died for: towards the new Republic of Man, which exists now in our hope and our faith, and shall exist in reality on earth.⁸²

The Transition to Theosophy

From 1886 Besant began to show a growing dissatisfaction with materialism and her assumptions concerning social reform, and in 1887 she made her first experiment in the founding of a new religion with a millennial goal. When Besant and W. T. Stead formed the Law and Liberty League, they were not only concerned with preserving the right of free expression, but they also wanted to create a Brotherhood or Church for the service of humanity. Besant recounted the events as follows:

Lately there has been dawning on the minds of men far apart in questions of theology, the idea of founding a new Brotherhood, in which service of Man should take the place erstwhile given to service of God; a Brotherhood in which work should be worship, and love should be baptism, in which none should be regarded as alien, who was willing to work for human good. One day as I was walking towards Milbank Gaol with the Rev. S. D. Headlam, on the way to liberate a prisoner, I said to him: "Mr. Headlam, we ought to have a new Church, which should include

all who have the common ground of faith in, and love for man'. And a little later I found that my friend Mr. W. T. Stead, editor of the Pall Mall Gazette, had long been brooding over a similar thought, and wondering whether men 'might not be persuaded to be as earnest about making this world happy, as they are over saving their souls'.

The teaching of social Duty, the upholding of social Righteousness, the establishment of Justice, the building up of a true Commonweal, such would be among the aims of the Church of the Future.⁸³

The formation of the Law and Liberty League and the Link resulted from the partnership of "an uncompromising and aggressive Atheist" and one who "has constantly affirmed that 'to be a Christ' is to him the command of God."⁸⁴ The creation of Ironside Circles in every community consisting of people dedicated to performing service and exposing injustice was to be the organizational structure of this new "Church." Stead and Besant realized that their goal for the world was similar to what some have called Utopia and Christians have called "'the kingdom of God upon earth.'" They preferred to call their goal the "'kingdom of Man.'"

But though the latter labels differ, the hope they describe and enshrine is one and the same; and the belief in the realisation of that hope is the one badge of the Army of the Commonweal, its adoption and profession the only qualification for Baptism into the Service of Man.⁸⁵

In 1886 Besant, even while making statements approving of materialism, began to question its assump-

tions by delving into psychology and experiments with hypnotism. Her magazine, Our Corner, published articles dealing philosophically with the issue of materialism. H. Bramley Moore's "Creed of Materialism" explained that matter contained within itself a "certain life-principle" which impelled it to change and to develop into all its many forms.⁸⁶ In 1887 Besant published serially an article written by Herbert Courtney entitled "Hylo-Idealism or Positive Agnosticism." This work took a point of view very similar to Bradlaugh's concerning the one substance which Courtney identified as matter. However, Courtney argued that all knowledge was entirely subjective since it was always conveyed through material means such as light waves striking the eye and then being transmitted to the brain. Courtney believed every perception was a product of each individual's own self-consciousness.⁸⁷ Although this article reflected the questions in which Besant was interested, she would reject Courtney's conclusions. As a Theosophist she would conclude that "God" as the one substance could be perceived accurately through the development of certain faculties.

Hylo-Idealism was also being discussed in the pages of The National Reformer. E. D. Fawcett wrote two letters identifying himself as a Theosophist and a pantheist and criticizing the materialistic point of view. He recommended the magazine, the Theosophist, and A. P. Sinnett's Esoteric Buddhism as explaining that the physical brain was a vehicle for thought and consciousness not the producer of these. He suggested that human beings could indeed develop faculties by which God, "the universal spirit" and the "inner consciousness," could be perceived. He cited Eastern Adepts as having developed this faculty. He also

referred to reincarnation as the mechanism by which each soul evolved.⁸⁸

For several years Besant had been interested in the work of the German scientist, Dr. Ludwig Büchner, and she had translated some of his works. In 1887 she reviewed his book Kraft und Stoff or Force and Matter. She also published an article in Our Corner by Büchner which summarized the issues dividing what he termed "Spiritualism" and "monistic Materialism." Büchner used the term Spiritualism to denote a belief in a supreme, omniscient, omnipotent, and universal Spirit which was the basis of the material universe and individual human souls, which continued to exist after the death of their physical bodies. He defined Materialism as the belief that all phenomena, including spiritual phenomena, derived from matter. Thus the Materialist did not see life continuing after the physical body and its constituent organs died, and rejected the notion of a universal Spirit.⁸⁹ Büchner wrote that he hoped for a philosophy that would combine Spiritualism and Materialism, but he did not state in what manner. In Theosophy Besant would finally opt for a Spiritualist position.

In addition to doubts concerning her materialism, Besant came to question her assumption that social improvement would bring the changes that she desired in the world. Increasingly she saw that human nature remained the same despite efforts at social change. Her thoughts on this matter will be examined in the next chapter, but they are mirrored in a Comtist speech published in one of the last issues of Our Corner.

The defect of Secularism, like that of Socialism, is an inadequate theory of human nature. The thorough-going State Socialist

thinks that if you can only get good political machinery and social organisations men and women are sure to become unselfish; but you cannot root out avarice and the lust of power by political and social machinery, however perfect. The Secularist seems to think that if you can only destroy theology and teach science, human nature will be sure to walk in the paths of virtue. This also is a vain belief, for you cannot get rid of 'pride, void glory and hypocrisy, envy, hatred and malice, and all uncharitableness', by any quantity of biblical criticism or scientific lectures.⁹⁰

This speaker went on to suggest that human nature could be changed by education, which began in childhood and was based on religious practices and religious organizations which, of course, would be Comte's Religion of Humanity. In her subsequent Theosophical career, Annie Besant would agree with this point of view, not in relation to Comte's Positivism, but in her emphasis on the importance of one's religious tradition being instilled at educational institutions.

Besant turned to Theosophy because she found in it the ultimate means of transforming human nature. Theosophy teaches that in individual cases, techniques of mysticism can lead to enlightenment, and in general terms, the evolution of the new sub-race and the subsequent Root Race will create a humanity which will be characterized by intuition and brotherhood.

Notes

¹Maurice Ashley, The People of England: A Short Social and Economic History (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1982), pp. 147-48.

²David Thomson, England in the Nineteenth Century (1815-1915), The Pelican History of England, vol. 8 (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books Ltd, 1950), pp. 14-16, 35.

³Ibid., pp. 117-18.

⁴Ashley, pp. 134, 143-45.

⁵Irene Clephane, Our Mothers: A Cavalcade in Pictures, Quotation and Description of Late Victorian Women 1870-1900, ed. Alan Bott (1932; reprint, New York: Benjamin Blom, Inc., 1969), p. 86.

⁶Ibid., p. 79; Ashley, p. 134.

⁷Alan Bott, Our Fathers (1870-1900), Manners and Customs of the Ancient Victorians: A Survey in Pictures and Text of Their History, Morals, Wars, Sports, Inventions & Politics (1931; reprint, New York: Benjamin Blom, Inc., 1972), p. 138.

⁸Warren Sylvester Smith, The London Heretics 1870-1914 (London: Constable & Co. Ltd, 1967), pp. 13-15.

⁹Annie Besant, "Edinburgh Slums," Our Corner 6 (December 1885): 339.

¹⁰Clephane, pp. 79-80.

¹¹Humphrey House, "The Mood of Doubt," in Ideas and Beliefs of the Victorians, ed. British Broadcasting Corporation (London: Sylvan Press Limited, 1949), pp. 71-77.

¹²Ibid., p. 73.

¹³Smith, p. 11.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 22.

¹⁵Horton Davies, Worship and Theology in England, vol. 4, From Newman to Martineau, 1850-1900 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962), p. 288.

¹⁶Smith, pp. 23-24.

¹⁷Annie Besant, My Path to Atheism (London: Freethought Publishing Company, 1877), p. vi.

¹⁸Many of these theologians expressed points of view which Besant later espoused as a Theosophist. Although it is impossible to know the specific works that Besant read by each of these men, and she never acknowledged any debt to these thinkers, their ideas may have influenced the direction her own thought was tending and she may not have been aware of this process.

In addition to sharing with Besant an intense concern for the condition of the working classes (Maurice, Robertson, Brooke, Channing, and Parker), several of these men held views that were very similar to those that would form the basis of Besant's millenarianism, although they may not have considered themselves pantheists or monists as did Besant. Brooke believed in the fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man and was concerned with building the Kingdom of God in Society. Channing believed that humanity was a reflection of God's image; the Infinite was mirrored in humanity. Once human beings were able to recognize the Divinity within themselves and others, "universal brotherhood" would be instituted on earth. Channing believed that this development, the Kingdom of Heaven, was close at hand. Coming to the same conclusion as Besant at the end of her career as atheist/socialist, he felt that social reform was superfluous until there had been a change in human nature. Robertson believed that brotherhood on earth was possible since all humans were children of God and God's life pervaded all things.

Maurice's thoughts on the "Doctrine of Sacrifice" and Robertson's comments on the "law of self-sacrifice" were almost identical to Besant's "Law of Sacrifice" described in the following chapter on her Theosophical thought. Sacrifice was the joyful giving up of selfishness in order to perform fully the will of God. The principle of sacrifice was built into the very structure of the universe.

As a Theosophist Besant would often refer to the verse in Matthew that Parker, Channing, and Robertson used to point to the perfectibility of each human being, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." Channing's goal was the perfection of the human character, whereas for Parker and Robertson perfection meant perfect obedience to God's will.

Parker believed in the existence of a "religious faculty" or "spiritual senses" in humans which allowed the individual to perceive God. Maurice as well believed that knowledge of God was possible and pointed out that the only alternate position was atheism. Besant was very concerned with the question of the existence of a "religious faculty" and eventually opted in its favor in Theosophy. However, as an atheist she would follow a line of argument similar to Mill in An Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy and conclude that upon Mansel's showing that humans had no faculty by which to perceive God, it was useless to worship and profess belief in a God.

Robertson, Channing, and Parker expressed additional beliefs that Besant would come to accept as a Theosophist. Robertson believed in the existence of a "supersensuous" world. Channing's belief that Jesus was a "Superangelic Being" who took human incarnation out of a great compassion for human suffering was very similar to Theosophical conceptions of the Masters and higher personages. Parker expressed a fundamental Theosophical tenet when he stated that there was only one kind of religion and that it had diverse manifestations. Fred L. Standley, Stopford Brooke (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1972), p. 27; Arthur W. Brown, William Ellery Channing (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1961), pp. 74, 77, 84, 93; William Henry Channing, ed., The Perfect Life. In Twelve Discourses. By William Ellery Channing, D.D. (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1873), pp. 53, 215-19; Stopford A. Brooke, ed., Life and Letters of Fred. W. Robertson, M.A., 2 vols. (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, & Co., 1882), pp. 1: 164-66, 208; Frederick W. Robertson, Sermons Preached at Trinity Chapel, Brighton, 3rd Series (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1859), pp. 150-55; Olive J. Brose, Frederick Denison Maurice: Rebellious Conformist (N.p.: Ohio University Press, 1971), pp. 249-50, 257; Frederick Denison Maurice, The Doctrine of Sacrifice (London: Macmillan and Co., 1879), pp. xliii-xliv, 101, 109-12, Henry Steele Commager, Theodore Parker: An Anthology (Boston: Beacon Press, 1960), pp. 42-43, 56, 93-95, 112; Theodore Parker, Views of Religion (Boston: American Unitarian Association, 1885), pp. 4-5; John Stuart Mill, An Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy and of the Principle Philosophical Questions Discussed in His Writings, 3d ed. (London: Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1867), pp. 106-7, 113-15, 120, 124, 128-29.

¹⁹Besant, My Path to Atheism, p. vii; Annie Besant, On the Deity of Jesus of Nazareth, in My Path to Atheism (London: Freethought Publishing Company, 1877), pp. 1-12.

²⁰Annie Besant, "On the Nature and Existence of God," in My Path to Atheism (London: Freethought Publishing Company, 1877), p. 119.

²¹Ibid., p. 120.

²²Ibid., p. 121.

²³Ibid., pp. 124-25.

²⁴Ibid., p. 125.

²⁵Ibid., p. 126.

²⁶Ibid., p. 132.

²⁷Ibid., pp. 137-38.

²⁸Annie Besant, The Gospel of Atheism: A Lecture (London: Freethought Publishing Company, 1877), p. 5.

²⁹C. Bradlaugh, A. Besant, and Charles Watts, eds., The Freethinker's Textbook (London: C. Watts, 1876), p. 118.

³⁰Annie Besant, Why I Do Not Believe in God (London: Freethought Publishing Company, 1887), pp. 3-4.

³¹Ibid., p. 5.

³²Bradlaugh, Besant, and Watts, eds., The Freethinker's Textbook, p. 118.

³³Hypatia Bradlaugh Bonner, Charles Bradlaugh: A Record of His Life and Work: With an account of his Parliamentary Struggle, Politics, and Teachings by John M. Robertson, M.P., 7th ed., 2 vols. in 1 (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1908), p. 2:122.

³⁴Ibid., pp. 127, 135-36.

³⁵Charles Bradlaugh, Has Man a Soul? (London: Freethought Publishing Company, 1888), p. 12.

³⁶Annie Besant, Life, Death, and Immortality (London: Freethought Publishing Company, 1886), p. 4.

³⁷*Ibid.*, p. 7.

³⁸*Ibid.*, p. 9.

³⁹Annie Besant, A World Without God: A Reply to Miss Frances Power Cobbe (London: Freethought Publishing Company, 1885), p. 7.

⁴⁰Budd, p. 46; G. J. Holyoake and Charles Bradlaugh, Secularism, Scepticism, and Atheism. Verbatim Report of the Proceedings of a Two Nights' Public Debate between Messrs. G. J. Holyoake & C. Bradlaugh (London: Austin & Co., 1870), p. 30.

⁴¹Annie Besant, "Constructive Rationalism," in My Path to Atheism (London: Freethought Publishing Company, 1877), p. 170.

⁴²W. M. Simon, European Positivism in the Nineteenth Century: An Essay in Intellectual History (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1963), p. 6.

⁴³*Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, p. 6; John Edwin McGee, A Crusade for Humanity: The History of Organized Positivism in England (London: Watts & Co., 1931), pp. 17, 34-35.

⁴⁶McGee, pp. 13, 68, 78, 86, 88-89; Susan Budd, Varieties of Unbelief: Atheists and Agnostics in English Society 1850-1960 (London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd, 1977), pp. 192, 194-96.

⁴⁷Annie Besant, Auguste Comte: His Philosophy, His Religion, and His Sociology (London: C. Watts, n.d.), p. 39.

⁴⁸Besant, "Constructive Rationalism," p. 171.

⁴⁹Besant, "On the Nature and Existence of God," p. 136.

⁵⁰J. B. Bury, The Idea of Progress: An Inquiry into Its Origin and Growth (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1921), pp. ix, 346-47.

⁵¹Besant, A World Without God, p. 17.

⁵²Ibid., p. 20.

⁵³Besant, The Gospel of Atheism, p. 12.

⁵⁴Besant, "On the Nature and Existence of God," p. 141.

⁵⁵Besant, "Constructive Rationalism," p. 175.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 172.

⁵⁷Bury, p. 44.

⁵⁸Ibid., pp. 330.

⁵⁹Charles Bradlaugh, "What Did Jesus Teach?" in Champion of Liberty: Charles Bradlaugh (London: C. A. Watts & Co., Ltd. and The Pioneer Press, 1933), p. 157.

⁶⁰Annie Besant, The Fruits of Christianity (London: Freethought Publishing Company, n.d.), pp. 15-16.

⁶¹John Saville, ed., A Selection of the Political Pamphlets of Charles Bradlaugh (New York: Augustus M. Kelley, Publishers, 1970), p. 5.

⁶²John Saville, ed., A Selection of the Social and Political Pamphlets of Annie Besant (New York: Augustus M. Kelley, Publishers, 1970).

⁶³Annie Besant, "Why I Am a Socialist," in A Selection of the Social and Political Pamphlets of Annie Besant, ed. John Saville (New York: Augustus M. Kelley, Publishers, 1970), p. 2.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 4.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 6.

⁶⁶Ibid., pp. 4-7.

⁶⁷J. R., "Pantheism.," National Reformer (London), 21 February 1875, pp. 124-25; T. P., "Atheism and Pantheism," National Reformer (London), 7 March 1875, pp. 155-56; William Maccall, "The Unseen Universe," National Reformer (London), 12 December 1875, pp. 370-

71; Annie Besant in her gushing biography of "Giordano Bruno," National Reformer (London), 23 July 1876, pp. 49-51, was very clear that he was a pantheist, not an atheist. In describing his philosophy of the involution of God's intelligence into lower orders of creation and the evolution of that intelligence to self-consciousness in superior beings, Besant was describing a philosophy very much akin to Theosophy. See also Annie Besant, "REVIEW. Life of Giordano Bruno. By J. Frith," National Reformer (London), 3 April 1887, p. 220.

⁶⁸Besant, "Why I Am a Socialist," p. 3.

⁶⁹J. W. Burrow, Evolution and Society: A Study in Victorian Social Theory (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), p. 193.

⁷⁰Annie Besant, "The Evolution of Society," in A Selection of the Social and Political Pamphlets of Annie Besant, ed. John Saville (New York: Augustus M. Kelley, Publishers, 1970), p. 3.

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²Ibid., p. 15.

⁷³Ibid.

⁷⁴Ibid., pp. 15-17.

⁷⁵Ibid., pp. 17-18.

⁷⁶Ibid., p. 18.

⁷⁷Annie Besant, "The Socialist Movement," in A Selection of the Social and Political Pamphlets of Annie Besant, ed. John Saville (New York: Augustus M. Kelley, Publishers, 1970), p. 22.

⁷⁸Ibid., p. 24.

⁷⁹Annie Besant, "Radicalism and Socialism," in A Selection of the Social and Political Pamphlets of Annie Besant, ed. John Saville (New York: Augustus M. Kelley, Publishers, 1970), p. 17.

⁸⁰Ibid., p. 19.

⁸¹Besant, "The Evolution of Society," p. 13.

⁸²Ibid., p. 24.

⁸³Annie Besant, "The Army of the Commonweal," Our Corner 11 (February 1888): 117.

⁸⁴Annie Besant and William T. Stead, "To Our Fellow Servants," Link (London), 4 February 1888, p. 1.

⁸⁵"The Abolition of Poverty," Link (London), 26 May 1888, p. 1.

⁸⁶H. Bramley Moore, "Creed of Materialism," Our Corner 7 (March 1886): 175-76.

⁸⁷Herbert Courtney, "Hylo-Idealism or Positive Agnosticism," Our Corner 10 (August 1887): 112-13.

⁸⁸E. D. Fawcett, "CORRESPONDENCE. Hylo-Idealistic Monism.," National Reformer (London), 2 January 1887, p. 11; E. D. Fawcett, "CORRESPONDENCE. Hylo-Idealistic Monism.," National Reformer (London), 23 January 1887, pp. 54-55.

⁸⁹Ludwig Büchner, "Freethought and Philosophic Doctrines: Considerations on Spiritualism, Materialism, and Positivism," Our Corner 9 (October 1887): 215.

⁹⁰R. G. Hember, "Secularism from a Positivist Point of View," Our Corner 12 (October 1888): 256.

CHAPTER V

Annie Besant's Theosophical Thought

Early History of the Theosophical Society and Its Principle Texts

A brief history of the early years of the Theosophical Society and a brief account of its primary texts are necessary for an understanding of the context into which Annie Besant stepped when she became a Theosophist in 1889.

The Theosophical Society was founded in New York City in 1875. The two moving spirits were Helena Petrovna Blavatsky and Henry Steel Olcott. Madame Blavatsky was born of Russian nobility. She married at age seventeen, but soon ran away from her husband. She travelled widely, and it was reported that she travelled to places such as Turkey, Greece, Egypt, France, Great Britain, Canada, the United States, Central America, parts of South America, the West Indies, Singapore, Java, and the Middle East. It was reported that she travelled in India for two years. During her travels she received money from her father and sometimes her husband. Blavatsky claimed that she lived in Tibet for five years as the student of mysterious Masters of occult wisdom. Blavatsky's presence in her younger years was often accompanied by spiritualistic phenomena such as rappings and moving of furniture. In 1871 while in Cairo she founded a short-lived Spiritist Society. She travelled to New York City in 1873 and was forty-three when she met Olcott in Vermont in 1874.¹

Henry Steel Olcott was raised in New York City but took up farming for four or five years in Ohio. He returned to the East to study agriculture. He set up a school of agricultural science in New York and became known as an authority on sorghum. After his school

failed, he became Associate Agricultural editor of the New York Tribune and the American correspondent of the Mark Lane Express, the British corn trade journal. He reported on the hanging of John Brown in West Virginia for the New York Tribune despite the fact that any known correspondent of the abolitionist Tribune himself risked hanging. Olcott served as a signals officer in the Union army during the Civil War. He was a Special Commissioner of the War Department and Special Investigator for the Navy to investigate corruption among government contractors during which time he was awarded the rank of Colonel. Olcott so distinguished himself by his investigations he was made one of the three-man commission appointed to investigate whether Lincoln's assassination was the result of a conspiracy. After the war Olcott studied law and built up a very successful practice specializing in customs, internal revenue, and insurance cases. His clients included the U. S. Treasury, the New York Stock Exchange, the Corporation of New York City, and the Panama Railway. Prior to the Civil War Olcott had married, and he and his wife had four children, two of whom died at an early age. Olcott and his wife were probably divorced prior to his meeting Madame Blavatsky. Olcott was forty-two when he met Blavatsky.²

The immediate antecedent to Theosophy as it originated in America was spiritualism. Spiritualism, in part, grew out of a situation very similar to that which gave rise to scepticism in Great Britain. The society was becoming more industrialized and urban, and scientific discoveries and theories were seen as undermining traditional Christian doctrines. Spiritualists felt that their seances reconciled religion and science by providing empirical proof of life after death.

Spiritualists were part of the American rebellion against Puritanism. "Spiritualists shared with liberal Christians an aversion to ideas of human depravity, predestination, vicarious atonement, and a final judgment."³ Instead they preferred to believe in the certainty of progress and the individual's ability to shape his own destiny. Many Spiritualists were concerned about creating a better world and took liberal positions concerning social issues.

Spiritualist publications argued for fairer treatment of American Indians, the abolition of capital punishment, prison reform, equality for women, higher wages for workers, and the right of labor to organize.⁴

Spiritualists hesitated to commit themselves to any specific set of beliefs and limited the definition of a spiritualist to a person who believed in the survival of the individual after death and in communication between the living and the dead.⁵ Spiritualism gave expression to what Campbell termed "Western occultism."

The occultist is one who operates outside established religion and has a concern for theories and practices based on esoteric knowledge. Occultism often includes the study of writings felt to contain secrets known to ancient civilizations but subsequently forgotten.⁶

During the Renaissance, occultism could be seen in alchemy, astrology, and magic. The Hermetism of Marsilio Ficino, Pico della Mirandola, and Giordano Bruno was based on a body of Greek writings attributed to Hermes Trismegistus. This literature combined astrology and alchemy with philosophical treatises

emphasizing "personal salvation through a gnosis or wisdom rather than through the aid of a personal God or Saviour."⁷ Hermetism had its roots in Neoplatonism. Plotinus in the third century A.D. taught that the universe had emanated from the One and that individuals might return to the One through mysticism. The Jewish Kabala was also greatly influenced by Neoplatonism.⁸

Occultism as defined by Campbell can be seen in groups such as the Rosicrucians and the Freemasons. Spiritualism was specifically indebted to the work of Mesmer and the Swedenborgians. The spiritualists were attracted to Mesmer's findings for their implications concerning "extrasensory perception and the evocation of latent human powers."⁹ The seventeenth-century scientist and mystic, Swedenborg, provided many accounts of visits to the realm of the departed spirits and angels which had great interest for the spiritualists.

So it can be seen that spiritualism as expressed in the United States shared many elements in common with Freethought, i.e., a rejection of Christianity and certain traditional Christian dogmas, a concern to develop a system of belief that was in agreement with recent scientific findings, a belief in the certainty of human progress, anti-institutionalism, and the assertion of each individual's right to exercise his own judgment concerning philosophical questions, and a liberal social position. These would be carried into Theosophy, which would add an intense interest in Asian religions.

In 1874 Olcott travelled to Vermont to report on the spiritualistic phenomena occurring at the Eddy home in Chittenden for the New York Daily Graphic. Blavatsky travelled to Vermont from New York for the

express purpose of meeting Olcott. Olcott was much impressed with the fact that the spirit figures that appeared during the Eddy seances took on an international character after Blavatsky's arrival. Blavatsky and Olcott became close friends and after returning to New York, they continued their experiments with spiritualistic phenomena. Olcott began receiving letters from various Masters, whom he understood as being persons who possessed a high understanding of occult matters. Olcott reported that he came under the tutelage of Masters belonging to the African section of the Occult Brotherhood, whereas shortly prior to his departure for India he was transferred to a group of Masters belonging to the Indian section.¹⁰

In May 1875 Olcott founded a short-lived "Miracle Club" to conduct seances. During this time Blavatsky was holding salons in her New York apartment which attracted spiritualists, Kabbalists, and others interested in the occult. On September 7, 1875, such a group decided to form an organization to be called the Theosophical Society. Olcott was elected President and Madame Blavatsky was Corresponding Secretary. William Q. Judge at that time was Counsel to the Society. The object of the Society was "to collect and diffuse knowledge of the laws which govern the universe." The additional objectives concerning the promotion of universal brotherhood and the study of comparative religions would be added in 1878.¹¹

Olcott's inaugural address indicates that he saw the work of the Theosophical Society as gathering evidence for the settlement of the claims of science and religion, which in the nineteenth century were seen as being in conflict. The study of "ancient philosophy" and "ancient science" would check the drift of

modern science toward atheism as well as free "the public mind of theological superstition." He saw the formation of the Theosophical Society as a watershed in the battle between theology and science. At this time, Olcott saw the work of the Theosophical Society as being primarily investigative in relation to discovering laws underlying spiritualistic and psychic phenomena.¹²

Also in September of 1875 Madame Blavatsky began writing Isis Unveiled which was published in two volumes in 1877. Blavatsky claimed that Isis was really written by the Masters who are considered by Theosophists to be the true founders of the Theosophical Society. Olcott assisted Blavatsky daily on this project and he believed that Blavatsky was inspired by the Masters during the writing of Isis, citing changes in her handwriting to indicate inspiration by different Masters. He testified that Blavatsky would look up and shorten her eyesight as the Masters held manuscripts and books before her eyes on the astral plane from which she copied down the text.¹³ William Emmette Coleman studied Isis Unveiled and claimed to have discovered about two thousand plagiarized passages. Bruce Campbell spot-checked and confirmed unattributed borrowing in the case of several dozen of the plagiarisms alleged by Coleman. Apparently Madame Blavatsky made extensive use of about one hundred books in writing Isis Unveiled, and Coleman provided a list of works from which passages were most often taken. These works consist of "nearly all current nineteenth-century works on occultism."¹⁴

Isis Unveiled proved very popular, the first edition of one thousand copies selling out in ten days. Two reprints were also sold out within the next year,

and fourteen other impressions were published during Blavatsky's lifetime.¹⁵ Volume I entitled "Science" was a polemic against scientific materialism as was prevalent in the nineteenth century, and Volume II entitled "Theology" was directed against dogmatic "theological Christianity" seen as "the chief opponent of free thought."¹⁶ Isis was an argument for Platonic or Hermetic philosophy, "the anciently universal Wisdom-Religion, as the only possible key to the Absolute in science and theology."¹⁷ However, in Isis Blavatsky saw Platonic philosophy as deriving from Indian thought and thus the book demonstrated a strong interest in Indian philosophies and texts. Blavatsky claimed that Isis was based on the teachings that she had received from "the sages of the Orient."¹⁸ Isis taught a philosophical viewpoint that would be more fully developed later in The Secret Doctrine. There was "one infinite and unknown Essence" that was successively passive and active. An "Outbreathing" from the Essence manifested the universe which the Hindus called the day of Brahmā. An "inbreathing" of the Essence created the dissolution of the universe or the night of Brahmā.¹⁹

After the initial founding of the Theosophical Society all of the original members except Olcott, Blavatsky, and Judge gradually lost interest and dropped out. As a result of a correspondence with disciples of Swami Dayananda in India, Blavatsky and Olcott came to see the Swami as an adept of the same "Himalayan Brotherhood" to which their own Masters belonged. It was thought desirable to merge the Theosophical Society with Swami Dayananda's organization, so in May 1878 "The Theosophical Society of the Arya Samaj" was created. However, once they discovered

that Swami Dayananda taught an exclusive and sectarian view of Hinduism, Olcott and Blavatsky disintangled the Theosophical Society. They attempted to define more carefully the principles of the Society which led to the formulating of the Society's three objectives. They also classified the membership of the Theosophical Society into three Sections, i.e., new members, serious students of occultism, and the Masters.²⁰

Olcott and Blavatsky travelled to India early in 1879. They settled in Bombay and created quite a stir by speaking out in appreciation of Indian culture. They started the magazine The Theosophist in October 1879 which provided an income for them. Madame Blavatsky demonstrated psychic phenomena which impressed Mr. A. P. Sinnett. Sinnett and Mr. A. O. Hume began to receive letters from the Masters K.H. (Koot Hoomi or Kuthumi) and M. (Morya). On the basis of these letters, Sinnett wrote The Occult World and Esoteric Buddhism. They were later published as The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett.²¹

Soon after arriving in India, Blavatsky and Olcott visited Ceylon and they demonstrated their regard for Buddhism by "taking pansil," which involved taking refuge in the Buddha, the dharma, and the sangha, and vowing to keep the Five Precepts. Olcott explained his action by saying that he regarded the teaching of Gautama Buddha as identical to the "Wisdom Religion" taught in the Upaniṣads. At that time, modern education in Ceylon could only be obtained in missionary schools where the study of Christianity was compulsory. The Sinhalese also suffered under other disabilities. Christian baptism was a requirement for government employment and Buddhist marriages were not recognized as legal. Olcott spoke to large crowds in order to

raise their pride in their own heritage. Olcott and the Theosophical Society subsequently created schools in which education was provided in consonance with the native religion. Sixty schools were organized in the first decade of effort, and in the 1960s there were as many as 400 schools. Olcott wrote a Buddhist Catechism for the use of students and had it approved by religious authorities. It went through forty editions in his lifetime. The Sinhalese generally regarded Olcott as being divinely sent to uplift Buddhism and even regarded him as a bodhisattva, one who will become a Buddha.²²

In 1882 the Theosophists purchased an estate at Adyar just outside Madras and made it their headquarters.

In 1884, while Blavatsky and Olcott were in Europe, a disgruntled Adyar employee, Emma Coulomb, brought charges that Madame Blavatsky had resorted to fraud in the production of certain phenomena. A shrine or cupboard in Blavatsky's room was used to produce letters from the Masters as well as previously missing or broken objects. Madame Coulomb charged that this was done by means of sliding panels constructed by her husband, and to prove her allegations she produced letters which she said were written by Blavatsky. An investigation by Theosophists revealed that there were indeed sliding panels in the back of the shrine which separated the shrine room from Blavatsky's bedroom. Theosophists maintained that the sliding panels and the hole in the wall were constructed by M. Coulomb after Blavatsky had left for Europe. W. Q. Judge, who was at Adyar at the time, prevented further investigation into the shrine by burning it. The Society for Psychical

Research sent Richard Hodgson to Adyar and he submitted a report confirming the charges of fraud.²³

After returning to India, Madame Blavatsky again left for Europe in 1885. After travelling about Europe for two years she settled in London. Olcott remained in India and made it clear that phenomena should be downplayed. Blavatsky said that phenomena had previously been necessary to draw attention to the philosophy that she was teaching but now it was no longer necessary. During this period she worked on The Secret Doctrine, founded her own magazine, Lucifer, and formed the Blavatsky Lodge in London.²⁴

Blavatsky demanded more power in the Society or else she would cause a schism.²⁵ Olcott allowed her to organize an Esoteric Section with herself in charge. Persons accepted into the membership of the E.S. were required to follow certain ascetic rules of living. Their status was probationary in their relationship to the Masters, and they tried to prepare themselves "for the study of practical Occultism or Raja Yoga."²⁶ Blavatsky saw the purpose of the E.S. as being the redemption of the exoteric Theosophical Society by striving to achieve the three objects that were set out for the Theosophical Society with particular emphasis on the object of brotherhood.

The object of this Section, then, is to help the future growth of the Theosophical Society as a whole in the true direction, by promoting brotherly union at least among a choice minority.²⁷

The power struggle between Olcott and Blavatsky continued until her death with certain Theosophists debating whether main allegiance should be directed to

Olcott at Adyar or Blavatsky in London. A European Section was set up with Blavatsky at its head.²⁸

The Secret Doctrine was published in two volumes in 1888. A third volume was published after Blavatsky's death and was a collection of Blavatsky's papers arranged by Annie Besant. Blavatsky reported that The Secret Doctrine was written in a manner similar to Isis Unveiled. Texts and historical events were projected before her astral vision by the Masters. Blavatsky's closest companion at the time related many instances of letters appearing from the Masters under mysterious circumstances as well as the occurrence of other forms of occult phenomena. Assistants noted that Blavatsky's personal library was very small and that she did not possess the books that were quoted in The Secret Doctrine. The process of verifying the quotations contained within the manuscript revealed that the page numbers of references were often reversed. Blavatsky explained that images seen in the "Astral Light" were often reversed as in a mirror image and that she had forgotten to write down the page numbers in the correct order.²⁹ William Emmette Coleman's study of The Secret Doctrine revealed numerous plagiarisms drawing on a number of works, but particularly Donnelly's work on Atlantis, Wilson's Vishnu Purana, Winchell's World Life, and Dowson's Hindu Classical Dictionary.³⁰

The two primary volumes of The Secret Doctrine purport to be a commentary on stanzas from "The Secret Book of Dzyan," written in "The Sacred Language of the Initiates."³¹ Volume I entitled "Cosmogogenesis" discussed the nature of the universe in terms of successive periods of absolute rest called "Pralayas" and manifestation and activity called "Manvantaras."

Involution of consciousness into matter and the evolution out of matter into spirit was explained in terms of waves of life and chains of planets. The second volume entitled "Anthropogenesis" described the evolution of humanity through successive "Root Races" of which there would be seven.

The Secret Doctrine differed from Isis Unveiled on certain philosophical points. In Isis human nature was divided into three components while The Secret Doctrine depicted human nature as being divided into seven principles. A study of Blavatsky's writings has shown that in her writings subsequent to The Secret Doctrine she added even more divisions to her description of human nature.³² A further difference was that the doctrine of reincarnation which later became an important element in Theosophy, and was taught in The Secret Doctrine, was not taught in Isis. In Isis Blavatsky wrote that reincarnation occurred only in very rare instances. Olcott has described how Blavatsky did not teach the doctrine of reincarnation until 1879, after which time they were living in India.³³ However, in The Key to Theosophy, Blavatsky was able to go back to Isis and interpret "destiny" which was described as being "self-made" as actually referring to karma.³⁴

Annie Besant joined the Theosophical Society shortly after its primary text, The Secret Doctrine, was published, which supplanted the earlier Isis Unveiled. Theosophical doctrine was presented in its mature form, but much work remained to be done to make this corpus of teaching readily available to the average reader. Blavatsky would live just long enough for Besant to come into a close relationship with her and to regard her as her guru.

The Attraction of Theosophy for Annie Besant

When Annie Besant read The Secret Doctrine she found that this text resolved for her the issues with which she had been grappling for years. Upon reading The Secret Doctrine, Besant immediately shifted from the monistic materialism which she had been questioning to a more pantheistic point of view. A belief in the One Existence or the One Life in all things made her dream of universal brotherhood on earth appear attainable. The doctrines of reincarnation and karma provided a satisfactory explanation of current social conditions and suffering in general. Service and self-sacrifice were emphasized in a way that Besant found appealing. Techniques of mysticism and the evolution of a new race would bring about the change in human nature that Besant felt was necessary in order to realize the goal of universal brotherhood.

Annie Besant became Blavatsky's favored disciple, and she immediately took a leading position in the Theosophical Society due to her natural leadership and her ability to present Theosophical doctrines in a clear and understandable manner. While Blavatsky was still living she often preferred to allow Besant to explicate her teaching.³⁵ Besant's many lectures and books presented Theosophy in a more intelligible language than that found in Blavatsky's primary works. Besant's primary sources in expounding Theosophy were The Secret Doctrine and Key to Theosophy by Blavatsky. Besant also quoted from Isis Unveiled as well as from Blavatsky's articles in Lucifer. Additionally, Besant drew on Indian texts to amplify and support Theosophical teachings. Besant's final source was her own

personal experience. In one book she said that this work was based on The Secret Doctrine, but that she had filled the gaps left by Blavatsky by her own observations.³⁶ Elsewhere she stated ". . . I am simply laying before you that which I have been taught, and which I have to a considerable extent verified by my own personal experiment, so that it has become to me a matter of knowledge."³⁷

Monism

One of the first attractions of Theosophy for Besant was that its tenets caused her to resolve her indecision concerning the nature of the "one substance." She decisively moved away from monistic materialism and settled on belief in a "Divine Life" or consciousness as being the one existence. Besant summarized the issues dividing monistic materialism and Theosophy as follows.

The essential point is: "What lies at the root of things, 'blind force and matter', or an existence which manifests itself in 'intelligence' to use a very inadequate word? Is the universe built up by aggregation of matter acted on by unconscious forces, finally evolving mind as a function of matter: or is it the unfolding of a Divine Life, functioning in every form of living and non-living thing? Is Life or Non-life at the core of things? Is 'spirit' the flower of 'matter', or 'matter' the crystallisation of 'spirit'?" Theosophy accepts the second of these pairs of alternatives, and this, among other reasons, because Materialism gives no

answers to the riddles in psychology. . . .³⁸

The riddles of psychology in which Besant was interested included clairvoyance, clairaudience, thought transference, hypnotism, the nature of dreams, and the power of imagination to affect health. While questioning her materialism she had delved much into these phenomena. Of the third object of the Theosophical Society, "To investigate unexplained laws of Nature and the powers latent in man,"³⁹ Besant wrote that it "much attracts me."⁴⁰ She felt that these phenomena indicated the direction in which human evolution was tending.

We do not believe that the forces of Evolution are exhausted. We do not believe that the chapter of Progress is closed. When a new sense was developing in the past its reports at first must have been very blundering, often very misleading, doubtless very ridiculous at times, but none the less had it the promise of the future, and was the germ of a higher capacity. May not some new sense be developing today, of which the many abnormal manifestations around us are the outcome?⁴¹

The evolution of new faculties of human perception answered the question that initially led Besant to atheism. Earlier she had concluded that God as the one substance for practical purposes did not exist for humankind since there was no human faculty which could distinguish God from the rest of the created world. At that time Besant did not rule out the possibility of the development of such faculties, although this thought was held in abeyance in her more confirmed atheism. Besant found in Theosophy a philosophy that

taught that individuals could develop such faculties and that eventually they would be common among humanity as a whole.

To agnostic science, which says all beyond the reach of present human faculties is 'unknowable', Theosophy replies that man is an evolving organism, evolving new powers, new senses, evolving new tools as it were--for investigation, and much of what you call 'unknowable' is indeed unknown to many to-day, but has been investigated by the few, and is not beyond the reach of those who dare to tread an unknown path. That which you say is 'unknowable' is only the undiscovered by the masses of the human race.⁴²

These faculties could give information of the higher planes of existence--the finer levels of matter in which consciousness embodied itself. Knowledge of these higher planes could answer the "riddles of psychology."⁴³

Besant felt that one of the reasons for the founding of the Theosophical Society was to discredit materialism. Even within her own lifetime, Besant could see that a strict scientific materialism had become an outmoded point of view, which she attributed partly to the success of Theosophical propaganda.⁴⁴ She looked forward to a time when higher human faculties would be evolved by which the finer realms of matter could be perceived and studied scientifically. These faculties would "do for them what the microscope, the telescope, and the spectroscope have done for investigation in the physical universe. . . ."⁴⁵

In expounding the doctrine of the One Existence or the Unity of God, Besant wrote that this concept was

found in all religions. According to her, even primitives who worshipped various entities believed in a "Great Spirit" underlying all.

He is Self-existent, Infinite and Eternal, the One Life on which all lives depend, the One Existence from which all existences are drawn. Everything that exists is in Him. . . .⁴⁶

In Theosophy the manifestation of the One Existence was described as taking place under three Aspects. This was why many religions described God in terms of a Trinity. The Hindu described the qualities of the manifested God as being Existence, Consciousness, and Bliss. Zoroastrian scriptures described God as consisting of "I am," "Wisdom," and "Bliss" among other qualities. The Kabala spoke of the One as manifesting as Kepher, the Crown or Bliss-aspect, Binah, Intelligence or Consciousness-aspect, and Chochmah, Universal Mind or Existence-aspect. Other Trinities were the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit of the Christians; Siva, Viṣṇu, Brahmā of the Hindus; Amitābha, Avalokitesvara, Manjusri of the Chinese and Tibetan Buddhists, Ahura-Mazda, Spento Mainyush, Armaiti of the Zoroastrians; the Mighty, the Wise, and the Merciful of the Muslims. The dead religions of the Egyptians and Chaldeans also proclaimed Trinities.⁴⁷ The creating of the universe was the work of the third Aspect. The sustaining and preserving of the universe was the function of the second Aspect. The dissolving of the universe was performed by the first Aspect.⁴⁸

The Life of God that had involved into matter was not only manifested in mineral, vegetable, animal, and human forms, but also manifested in numerous suprahuman beings who were ranked in an Occult Hierarchy and

performed various functions in the universe. These were the devas of the Hindus and Buddhists, the angels and archangels of the Christians and Muslims, and the Amesha Spentas of the Zoroastrians. In addition, there were nature spirits variously known as elementals, fairies, genii, jinn. The devas or angels were God's agents in the universe. Some oversaw the functioning of natural laws, and others were charged with assisting humans and the answering of their prayers.⁴⁹

Besant found that opting for a more pantheistic position provided a logical basis for the actualization of her dream of true world brotherhood. If there was one life in all beings, then the fact of Universal Brotherhood could be recognized by all "based upon the identity of all with the Universal Self."⁵⁰

Sexless, endless, without color, caste or race, the eternal Self embodies itself in endless varied modifications. The stone and the Deva, the tree and the man, the animal and the savage; all these are but transient phenomena of the ever-lasting, ever-manifesting Self; and as that Self is recognised in every land, in all conditions, and under all circumstances, then and then alone will come the recognition of the Universal Brotherhood which excludes none from its pale.⁵¹

It was a significant point of attraction for Besant that not only did the monism of Theosophy provide a philosophical basis for the existence of Universal Brotherhood, but that the first and most important object of the Theosophical Society was "to form a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex,

caste or colour."⁵² Since the manifestation of Universal Brotherhood on this planet was Besant's millennial goal, this theme will be elaborated in the subsequent section on "Millenarian Elements of Theosophy."

The Laws of Karma and Sacrifice

Another attraction of Theosophy for Besant was in the explanation provided by what she described as the operation of two natural laws, the Law of Karma and the Law of Sacrifice. The Law of Karma provided the answer to the question of suffering that had long troubled Besant, and the Law of Sacrifice or Service, a principle to which she had long been devoted, provided the means to eliminate suffering.

Besant related how she had despaired of the social conditions in Great Britian and wondered why some people lived lives of suffering and others of comfort.

Most painful of all in the old days was it to feel that the case of the adults one addressed was hopeless; that no change that could be brought about could make amends for the wrong they had endured, nor open up to them a life worthy to be lived by men.⁵³

The doctrines of reincarnation and karma provided the answers for Besant. Each person was born to his present life according to his past deeds and the lessons to be gained from the present circumstances. The slum-dwellers of the East End of London were not condemned to their plight by an uncaring theistic God, but they were portions of the immortal life itself and were enduring the circumstances most conducive to their progress.⁵⁴

Reincarnation was the means of manifestation of the One Existence in the human stage of evolution. Reincarnation was governed by the Law of Karma or what Besant called the Law of Action and Re-Action.

Wherever there is Action there must inevitably be Re-Action, and this is the Law of the material worlds; every object is related to, interlinked with, other objects, and by these inter-relations they evolve.⁵⁵

Spirit was clothed in material vehicles and every change in consciousness was accompanied by a corresponding vibration in the matter of the physical vehicles. These changes were governed by the Law of Action and Re-Action, or the Law of Cause and Effect. Thus karma was the Law of Evolution in matter.⁵⁶

Working in conjunction with the Law of Karma was the Law of Sacrifice. The unity of the One Existence which included within itself the Universal Brotherhood of all of humanity was the reason for the importance of service or self-sacrifice. Following the teaching of the Bhagavad-Gītā, the true Theosophist acted in such a way as to be an instrument carrying out the Divine Will. Action performed in this manner would not create new karma.⁵⁷

How can you be free? I have just given you the word of freedom: Sacrifice--that which is done for the sake of carrying out the Divine Will in the world, that which is done because you feel yourself part of One Life found in every one around you, equally dwelling. That which you do for the whole, not for a part, that which you do as living in God and doing God's work--that action alone does not bind the man, for it is an

action that is sacrifice, and has no binding power; and that sort of action is what we call Service.⁵⁸

Once a person brought his individual will into "conscious harmony with the Divine Will," he became a force promoting progressive evolution. That person

. . . becomes an energy for progress, and the whole race then benefits by the action which otherwise would only have brought to the sacrifices a personal fruit, which in its turn would have bound his Soul, and limited his potentialities for good.⁵⁹

Karma governed the evolution of the physical vehicles, although the Spirit within could not escape its effects. Karma bound the Spirit to the material world. The Law of Sacrifice was the law governing the evolution of the Spirit.

The Spirit lives and triumphs by sacrifice, as the body thrives and evolves by wisely directed activity; hence the spiritual declaration is: 'He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal,'¹ and 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'² ⁶⁰

¹S. John, xii. 25.

²Acts, xx. 35.

Besant elaborated on the Law of Sacrifice by saying that "Sacrifice is the outpouring of life for the benefit of others, and this law of the unfolding Spirit is the law by which the worlds are built and upheld."⁶¹ The religions of the world described sacrifice as beginning the manifestation of the

universe. Hindu scriptures variously described creation as resulting from a horse sacrifice or from the sacrifice of the supreme Spirit (puruṣa). The Book of Revelation said that the Lamb was "slain from the foundation of the world." According to Zoroastrian scriptures, Ahura Mazda was manifested through a sacrifice.

This outpouring of the Divine Spirit to bring the universe into being stamps on it Sacrifice as the Law of Life, and bids us realise that, to Spirit, Sacrifice is a joyful expression of life, and not a pain, as it seems to the body.⁶²

Both the Law of Karma and the Law of Sacrifice were natural laws and as such they did not alter in their operation. Disregard of natural laws brought pain and unhappiness. Knowledge and understanding of these laws were necessary in order that one could work in harmony with them, which in turn would result in joy and happiness.⁶³ For Besant, knowledge of the Law of Karma explained the existence of suffering, and knowledge of the Law of Sacrifice, an idea which had long been her ultimate concern, provided the means by which suffering could be alleviated and finally eliminated. The person who lived by the Law of Sacrifice not only was no longer bound by the Law of Karma, but he became a force for alleviating the suffering of others.

Altruism Taught by Blavatsky

Annie Besant with her interest in service and creating world brotherhood found her natural guru in Madame Blavatsky. Although Blavatsky was not as active in a practical manner as was Besant, she emphasized the

importance of service or self-sacrifice saying that Theosophy was "pure altruism."⁶⁴ She explained the suffering of groups of people in terms of "distributive Karma" or "national Karma." This was karma that was shared due to the "interdependence of humanity."⁶⁵ She wrote that suffering caused by distributive karma could only be rectified by heroic efforts of individuals. As an example of such a "national saviour" she cited a letter from a woman whose name was "too respected and too well known to be given to scoffers."⁶⁶ The tone of this letter in its concern for the living conditions of the poor in a London suburb indicate that this was most likely a letter from Annie Besant. Blavatsky wrote that social reform could be accomplished by understanding the principles of "Universal Unity and Causation; Human Solidarity; the Law of Karma; Reincarnation. These are the four links of the golden chain which bind humanity into one family, one Universal Brotherhood."⁶⁷

If the action of one reacts on the lives of all, and this is the true scientific idea, then it is only by all men becoming brothers and all women sisters, and by all practising in their daily lives true brotherhood and true sisterhood, that the real human solidarity, which lies at the root of the elevation of the race, can ever be attained. It is this action and interaction, this true brotherhood and sisterhood, in which each shall live for all and all for each, which is one of the fundamental Theosophical principles that every Theosophist should be bound, not only to teach, but to carry out in his or her individual life.⁶⁸

Any proposed action for social amelioration should be tested by asking whether or not it would promote true brotherhood. By helping others, the Theosophist could help people fulfill their karma as well as fulfill his own.

It is the development of humanity, of which both he and they are integral parts, that he has always in view, and he knows that any failure on his part to respond to the highest within him retards not only himself but all, in their progressive march.⁶⁹

For this reason, Blavatsky felt the highest standard of Theosophy was self-sacrifice.⁷⁰

The Voice of the Silence, a small work written down by Blavatsky while vacationing with Besant at Fontainebleau, advocated living an active life in the world in the service of others. In the course of individual spiritual development, service not only benefited others but it was the means by which liberation was achieved. "To reach Nirvana one must reach Self-Knowledge, and Self-Knowledge is of loving deeds the child."⁷¹ The Voice upheld the ideal of the bodhisattva or the individual who continuously postponed his own enlightenment for the sake of the salvation of others.

Sweet are the fruits of Rest and Liberation for the sake of Self; but sweeter still the fruits of long and bitter duty. Aye, Renunciation for the sake of others, of suffering fellow men.⁷²

The bodhisattva ideal as expressed in The Voice of the Silence and Blavatsky's other works naturally appealed to Besant and continued to inform her thought and actions for the rest of her life. The goal for

Besant was not liberation and escape from the material world to a state of bliss, but perfect vigorous action in the world for the service of others. A life lived in this manner would automatically lead to liberation.

Study of Comparative Religion

A final attraction of Theosophy for Annie Besant related to the second object of the Theosophical Society, "To encourage the study of comparative religion, philosophy, and science."⁷³ Theosophy as the "Wisdom Religion" or the "Universal Religion" claimed to teach the truths that were common to all religions and thus promote religious brotherhood over sectarianism.⁷⁴

The previous chapters have indicated that Besant had some interest in and familiarity with eastern thought as well as the comparative study of religions prior to becoming a Theosophist. After converting to Theosophy Besant became a student of world religions and wrote and lectured a great deal on this topic. She particularly endeavored to expound ideas found in Indian religions. Since Theosophy taught the means to obtain "the direct knowledge of God" it could be called "Atma-vidya" or the "Science of the Self" or "Brahma-vidya," the "Science of the Eternal." She identified these teachings with the "core of Hinduism."⁷⁵ Besant felt that the religions of the East were the repository of the Universal Religion and that the study of comparative religions would make this wisdom known to the West.

There is no brotherly service the East can do to the West comparable to the unveiling of her hidden treasures of spiritual knowledge,

the pouring out of her jealously-guarded spiritual truths; ever has the East been the mother of religions, and she comes now again to the aid of the West, sorely pressed by the advancing hosts of Materialism.⁷⁶

Theosophy resolved for Annie Besant a number of questions and interests that she had been pursuing, in some cases, for years. She repudiated her monistic materialism in favor of a qualified non-dualism, which she felt provided explanation for certain "riddles in psychology." The monism of Theosophy provided a philosophical basis for her desire to serve and create a condition of Universal Brotherhood, these relating to the first object of the Theosophical Society. The doctrines of reincarnation and karma provided a satisfactory explanation of suffering. Theosophy's promotion of the comparative study of religions intensified an earlier interest of Besant and was shown to be a means of creating Universal Brotherhood.

Millenarian Elements of Theosophy

Collective Salvation

The primary elements conducive to millenarianism in Theosophy were a scheme for a collective and earthly salvation and the superhuman agents who would accomplish this salvation. The millennial condition would be accomplished gradually and non-catastrophically through the gradual progress of evolution. Besant added messianism to the superhuman agents, and thus she formed a progressive messianic movement within the Theosophical movement.

Toward the end of her career as a Radical and Socialist, Annie Besant began to question whether the collective salvation for which she was working could be accomplished by mere social reform. Increasingly she began to see that the real reform had to be a change in human nature.

But there was one gnawing anxiety which made itself felt at my heart during those years of eager propagandist work, and that was: 'When these changes are accomplished, when the basis of society is justice instead of injustice, when none live idly, and there is comfort for all, will there reappear in the new environment the old evils, and will human passion, greed, and selfishness once more eat away the foundations of social peace and destroy the hardly-made equilibrium of society?'

As I often marked that the animating feeling of many of my hearers was hatred rather than love, that the longing to rebel against injustice that wronged them was more potent than the longing to win justice for all, that it was still the feeling of a class against a class, rather than the yearning for brotherhood in the nation; as all this was often borne in on me my heart would fail, and I felt the need of some mightier magic than my poor wits could master, less to transform the social environment than to transform the men and women who dwelt therein. The desperate misery, the heart-rending degradation, the maddening sense of impotence in face of the widespread evil--all these things tear at

the hearts of those who would give their very lives if life might serve as redemption for the poor, the outcast, and the vile. Into this blackness of darkness stepped Theosophy once more with word of hope, nay, of certainty of cure. It explained the evils while it pointed to the sure way of escape, and it whispered of a road of uttermost self-sacrifice, of completest self-surrender, that those might take who cared more for mankind than they feared suffering, who loved their race better than themselves.⁷⁷

Theosophy described the means by which human selfishness would be transformed into the Universal Brotherhood which had its basis in the Unity of God. Individual selfishness grew out of being embodied in matter which caused the sense of separateness. The condition for a true realization of the Brotherhood of Man in the world was for each person to know himself as part of the One Spirit and not as being solely the material body. Matter grew and preserved itself "by taking, by constantly appropriating that which is without and incorporating it with that already possessed. . . ."⁷⁸

Hence Brotherhood must have its roots in Spirit, and spread outwards through the intellectual and emotional realms, until it finally asserts itself in the material; it can never be made by legislation imposed from without; it must triumph by Spirit, outwelling from within.⁷⁹

Besant believed that Brotherhood was a natural law just as was the Law of Karma and the Law of Sacrifice. The operation of the Law of Brotherhood could be seen

in past history, "For a law proves itself as completely by the destruction of that which disregards it, as by the support of that which is harmonious with it."⁸⁰

Nation after Nation, State after State, has fallen into ruin by the ignoring of Brotherhood; where the strong oppress the weak, instead of protecting them; where the rich exploit the poor, instead of aiding them; where the learned despise the ignorant, instead of educating them; there the inexorable finger of nature writes over the civilisation: Doomed. But a little while and it has passed away. Only when Brotherhood is practised, shall a civilisation rise that shall endure.⁸¹

The mechanics of achieving Universal Brotherhood in the millennial condition that Besant called "the Day of Man"⁸² will be described shortly. That this was indeed a collective and nonexclusive salvation was emphasized by the following statement.

No one of us can be saved by his own efforts unless his brother rises side by side with him. Our work is the work of a common salvation; our work here is the work of a common duty to common human need; and in doing that, in devoting ourselves to that, we shall be true Theosophists, working out the spirit of the Philosophy, and climbing upwards towards the Higher Life.⁸³

The One Existence Manifested in Seven Realms

The reference given earlier to Brotherhood spreading from the Spirit out into the intellectual, emo-

tional, and material realms is an example of specific Theosophical doctrines undergirding the millennial goal of Universal Brotherhood. It is necessary to have an understanding of the seven planes of existence and their corresponding human vehicles as taught in Theosophy in order to have an understanding of the mechanics of how the goal of Universal Brotherhood will be accomplished. An understanding of Theosophical cosmology and anthropology is also necessary to have an understanding of the superhuman agents that will bring about the millennial goal.

Following the teachings of Blavatsky, Besant believed that the universe was divided into seven planes, each of which consisted of increasingly subtle matter. The two highest planes were the realm of the Logoi or great centers of consciousness of the One Existence in manifestation. These planes were beyond human knowledge. The Logoi or Is'varas were ranked in ascending order, i.e., the Planetary Logoi, the Solar Logos for our solar system, a Logos over every group of solar systems, and an even more encompassing Logos.⁸⁴

The five lower planes were the realm of human evolution. In order to describe these planes it was also necessary to describe the vehicles of human consciousness that operated on each plane. One Monad or spark of the divine consciousness possessed seven bodies or material vehicles that operated on the five planes and their sub-planes. These were:

- 1) The Super-Spiritual ("Atmic") Body
- 2) The Spiritual ("Buddhic") Body or "Ananda-mayakosha"
- 3) The Mental Bodies
 - a. The Causal Body or "Higher Manas"
 - b. The Mind Body or "Lower Manas"

- 4) The Astral or Desire ("Kāmic") Body
- 5) The Physical Bodies
 - a. The Etheric Double or "Linga Sharīra"
 - b. The Gross Body or "Sthūla Sharīra"

Despite the existence of all these bodies, consciousness remained a unity although the physical vehicle of the average human being was not aware of the functioning of the other vehicles. The "Atma-Buddhi-Manas" was known as the "Immortal Triad." These were the three components of the human Monad. They were linked in a Triangle of Light by the "Sutratma" or a thread made of buddhic matter. The Sutratma extended to connect the lower vehicles which were known as the "Perishable Quarternary."⁸⁵

The atmic body consisted of one atom made of the finest matter which embodied the divine Spirit.

Gradually into this super-spiritual body will pass the pure result of all experiences, stored up in eternity, the two lower immortal bodies gradually merging themselves in it, blending with it, the glorious vesture of a man consciously divine, made perfect.⁸⁶

The atmic or nirvānic plane "is the plane of pure existence, of divine powers in our fivefold universe. . . ." Those who consciously lived on this plane had solved "the problem of uniting the essence of individuality with non-separateness, and live, immortal Intelligences, perfect in wisdom, in bliss, in power."⁸⁷

The buddhic body belonged to the world of spiritual wisdom, knowledge, and love. This body was sometimes called the Christ-body, and it became active at the first Initiation.⁸⁸ Experience on the buddhic

plane was a simultaneous experience of unity and duality.

Words fail me to convey the idea, for words belong to the lower planes where duality and separation are ever connected, yet some approach to the idea may be gained. It is a state in which each is himself, with a clearness and vivid intensity which cannot be approached on lower planes, and yet in which each feels himself to include all others, to be one with them, inseparate and inseparable.⁸⁹

The buddhic body became developed and more functional by the cultivation of pure love, compassion, and feelings of self-sacrifice.⁹⁰

The mind world consisted of seven sub-planes which were divided into two groups. The four lower sub-planes were called rūpa, and the three higher were called arūpa. The vehicle that operated on the rūpa level was called the mind body and was part of the Perishable Quaternary. The vehicle for the arūpa level was called the causal body and was part of the Immortal Triad.⁹¹ The causal body consisted of a delicate film of colorless subtle matter. This thin shell served the purpose of separating the consciousness from all other forms of consciousness. In this way, individuality was preserved as long as it was conducive to evolution. The consciousness inside the causal body was called the Ego. Since the causal body was the vehicle for the reincarnating Ego it passed on the faculties and tendencies acquired from past incarnations to the next.⁹² The mind body was oval or egg-shaped and interpenetrated the physical and astral bodies. A person could develop the mind body by learning how to

concentrate and to think sequentially. After death the mind body passed into Devachan, which was on the mental plane but was only a part of the mental plane. At death, when the person left the physical and astral bodies behind, he took with him a "mass of mental material" to the devachanic world where he worked them up into faculties. At the end of the devachanic life the mind body gave these faculties to the causal body to be passed on to the next incarnation and the mind body disintegrated.⁹³

Besant identified Devachan with the descriptions of heaven found in various world religions. In Devachan, the emphasis was on the development of the good faculties. Evil faculties were passed on by the causal body but they did not become part of the fabric of the causal body. The Devachanic experience consisted primarily of rest and bliss.

The Soul reaps in heaven, the world of thought untainted by the lower desires, the harvest of all good seed of thought and pure emotion sown during his sojourn in the physical world. It is a condition of unbroken and unalloyed bliss, varying in degree, certainly, if regarded from outside, but in every case filling the capacity for happiness of the dweller therein.⁹⁴

The astral body was the vehicle of desires and the center of sensation. It connected the physical body with the mental body. An impact made on the physical senses "becomes a sensation in the astral body, and is then perceived by the mind."⁹⁵ In the astral body "these simple sensations aggregate themselves together into feelings. . . ." ⁹⁶ One's astral body could be developed by cultivating aesthetic emotions and by

purifying one's thoughts since the astral body was very sensitive to thought.⁹⁷ During sleep the astral body separated from the physical bodies. If the astral body was poorly developed it would stay close to the physical body as an amorphous shape. If the astral body was well-developed it would have a shape in the likeness of the person and could be used to travel in the astral world or "Kamaloka" to visit other people in their astral bodies. In the early stages it might be difficult for the astral body to impress on the physical brain the memory of its activities in the astral world.⁹⁸

At death, the individual spent some time in the astral world in his astral body. This state was described in various scriptures.

The world into which man passes at death, called by many names, and with many subdivisions--paradise, purgatory, summerland, modified hell, desire-land (kāma loka), ghost land (preta loka)--but all the names convey the idea of an intermediate condition, sometimes quite happy, sometimes suffering, sometimes purifying, sometimes punitive, but not the state of perfect bliss or--for those who still believe in it--the state of hopeless woe, attained later.⁹⁹

The Physical Body consisted of two parts, the body which we can see and the etheric double. The etheric double in appearance was a duplicate of the gross body. Ether was ākāśa or the medium which conducted prāṇa, a portion of the universal Life-Breath which vitalized and held together the molecules of the physical body. Electricity was one form that prāṇa took. At death the

etheric double separated from the gross body but remained nearby to gradually disintegrate.¹⁰⁰

The physical world, although the lowest and most gross, was very important because this world provided the experiences that made for growth on the other planes.

This is the world of causes, in which he sows the seed, the harvest of which he reaps on the other side of death. It is this fact which gives to the physical world such great importance, although man's stay in it is comparatively short.¹⁰¹

Apprehension of the one existence of which all were a part was a function of the buddhic vehicle, also referred to as Spirit or intuition. Thus when Besant said that Spirit must pervade the intellectual, emotional, and physical realms she meant that the intuition or buddhi must become active so that its perception of unity or brotherhood would be the guiding motive in the other realms of life. The evolutionary process in which buddhi would become active in the human race will be examined shortly, but first the nature of the superhuman agents guiding the evolutionary progress should be discussed.

The Superhuman Agents

In Theosophy progressive evolution proceeded according to the Divine Plan of the Logos. Perfect freedom came from choosing to cooperate with the Divine Will. Humans and nations might choose whether or not to cooperate, but the purposes of the Divine Plan were ultimately to be carried out.

The Masters and several higher personages were individuals who had perfectly attuned their wills to the Divine Will and acted as agents of the Logos in guiding earthly evolution. Although the Masters were human, they had reached a level of perfection that put them far above ordinary humanity and they possessed knowledge of and the ability to control great natural forces. They formed the lowest grade of the Occult Hierarchy. A Master epitomized the principle of self-sacrifice or the bodhisattva ideal because after attaining human perfection or liberation, he relinquished the opportunity for further enlightenment and bliss in other realms in order to remain to help evolution on this planet.¹⁰²

A Master was an individual whose consciousness "is able to function unbrokenly through the five great spheres in which evolution is proceeding. . . ." ¹⁰³ In Hinduism the Masters were known as jīvanmuktas, or those who were liberated while living. They could be found in the pages of the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata, and the Purāṇas, and they included men such as Nārada and Yājñavalkya. In Buddhism, there was the Buddha himself, the Bodhisattva or Buddha-to-come, and the arhats or liberated disciples. Zarathushtra, Jesus, and Muhammed were Masters. The Sufis believed in such Masters, and the Roman Catholic saints were a similar conception.¹⁰⁴

The Masters were the guardians of the Universal Religion and from time to time one of them would come forth to found a new religion in order to put forward another aspect of the Universal Religion. As long as that religion lived in the world, that Master would look over it and guide it. The Masters also shaped historical events in the world to help the progress of

evolution by sending out guiding thoughts and energy. In this regard they worked closely with the Guardian Angels of the Nations.¹⁰⁵ Their thoughts were the source of the inspiration and flashes of insight of artists, musicians, philosophers, scientists, and philanthropists.¹⁰⁶

Under the agency of the Masters the millennial condition of a civilization based on Universal Brotherhood would be accomplished.

. . . They [the Masters] shall establish it, and the Spirit of Love, in which each religion has been cradled, shall brood over the maturity of the Race.¹⁰⁷

There were several higher offices in the Occult Hierarchy that were concerned with guiding evolution on earth. Of particular importance were the Manu and the World-Teacher. These were superhuman agents that will be discussed shortly in relation to Besant's belief in the progressive evolution of the human race that would allow for the development of a new faculty which would lead to the creation of a new civilization based on brotherhood. The World-Teacher in particular will be discussed in the final chapter since this personage became the key ingredient in Annie Besant's messianism.

The Mechanics of Attaining the Millennial Condition

The Individual Path

Theosophy offered two practical means of attaining the millennial condition of Universal Brotherhood on this planet. First there were methods by which an individual might achieve the constant perception of

unity with the One Existence. Then there was a scheme of human evolution whose goal was a collective earthly salvation or a "new civilization."

The Path to Perfection was the name of the individual process leading to conscious perception of unity with the One Existence. This was done "by profound devotion to God and unwearying service of Man."¹⁰⁸ The Path was marked by a series of Initiations or ceremonies conducted by the Masters admitting the candidate to a new expansion of consciousness. The initiates of varying grades formed an association called the Great White Brotherhood, of which the Masters formed the highest grade.¹⁰⁹ One first entered the Path when one became obsessed by an idea that was motivated by service. This quality could be seen in the lives of heroes and martyrs. In Annie Besant's case, this occurred when she single-mindedly defended the right to publish information on birth control.¹¹⁰

In order to tread the Path one was required to submit to a physical discipline which included the avoidance of alcohol because it poisoned the brain which must be used for meditation, and vegetarianism since eating meat coarsened the body and kept it from being sensitive to subtle vibrations.¹¹¹

In addition there were four Qualifications necessary to be able to tread the Path. These were:

- 1) The Power to discriminate between the permanent and impermanent.
- 2) Desirelessness for things that are impermanent. One must concentrate one's desire on the Eternal.
- 3) The Six Jewels or mental qualities.
 - a. Control of Mind which includes the

ability to concentrate on one thing and to use the mind to build up character.

- b. Control of Action.
 - c. Tolerance.
 - d. Endurance to remain strong in the search for truth.
 - e. Faith in the divinity within oneself.
 - f. Balance which is equilibrium or the absence of passion.¹¹²
- 4) The Desire for Union or Love,¹¹³ which is "the desire to be true, the will to be free, in order that you may help."¹¹⁴

These qualifications did not have to be perfectly acquired in order to enter the Path and receive the guidance of a Master, but they must have become one's goal in which some progress was being made in attaining them. Meditation as concentrated thought was the means to make these qualifications part of oneself.¹¹⁵

There were five Initiations and each carried with it obligations to be fulfilled. The fifth Initiation brought the individual to "perfection" meaning that he could evolve no further as a human. At this point he could choose to remain on earth to guide evolution or he might depart for evolutionary work on other planets of our solar system.¹¹⁶ On an individual basis, the Path to Perfection was the means of transforming human nature.

The Evolution of the Human Race

In addition to a scheme of individual human perfection, The Secret Doctrine presented a scheme of human racial evolution that would culminate in a human condition in which all would perceive and participate

in the underlying unity of the One Existence, and Universal Brotherhood would be a living reality. The human race was evolving to such a point through the sequential evolution of seven Root Races. The evolutionary process was ongoing and did not come to rest at any particular point, no matter what level of advancement was achieved. Our planet earth, as was the case with the other planets in the solar system, was just one link in a chain of globes, the other globes being invisible since they existed on the subtler levels of matter. A Round of life passed through each globe until evolution was complete on that globe and the results of that evolution were passed on to the next globe where the evolutionary process occurred again.¹¹⁷ For practical purposes humans could only be concerned with human progress on earth, but once the pinnacle was reached for this planet, the evolutionary process would be continued in another realm.

The first two human Root Races that evolved on earth were hardly human as we know it. By the Third Root Race the human form was developed and reproduction was by sex. Each Root Race developed on its own continent or configuration of land, and all future Root Races would have their own continent. The continent of the Third Root Race was Lemuria, and modern day Negroes were descendants of the Lemurians. When the Lemurian continent broke up, the Atlantean continent was formed on which the Fourth Root Race lived. There were many people presently on earth who were descendants of the Fourth Root Race including the American Indians, the Chinese and the Japanese. The Fifth Root Race was the Aryan Race. Each Root Race was divided into sub-races. The first Aryan sub-race was located in India. The second sub-race was the Aryo-Semitic. The Iranians

formed the third sub-race and the Kelts the fourth. The fifth sub-race was the Teutonic which during Annie Besant's lifetime had political and economic ascendancy in the world.¹¹⁸

Each Root Race was guided in its evolution by a member of the Occult Hierarchy called a Manu. A Manu was at work whenever a Root Race arose. The Manu of the Fifth Root Race was Vaivasvata Manu so the Aryans are called "Sons of Manu." When it was time for a new Root Race to be developed, the Manu of the previous Race cooperated with the Manu of the coming Root Race. The origin of any Root Race was in the sub-race of the corresponding number of the previous Root Race. The seeds of the Fifth Root Race were drawn from the fifth sub-race of the Fourth Root Race. In the same way, the sixth sub-race of the Fifth Root Race, which was just developing, would be the source for the Sixth Root Race.¹¹⁹

The different Root Races evolved different characteristics. The Fourth Root Race was characterized by emotion. In the Fifth Root Race the mental capacity was developed. The sub-races had a similar correspondence. The fourth Aryan sub-race, the Kelts, who were the Greeks, Romans, Spaniards, French, and Irish, were more emotional in temperament. The fifth Aryan sub-race included the Slavs and Germans who operated more on the mental plane.¹²⁰

The sixth Aryan sub-race which was to arise shortly would be characterized by buddhi, "that spiritual intuition which illuminates the intellect,"¹²¹ and which would be developed further in the Sixth Root Race. These forerunners of the new Root Race would have a more delicate and sensitive nervous system that would not be able to tolerate the tumult of

modern city life, nor would it be suited to meat-eating. The sixth sub-race would develop on the American continent, and the Sixth Root Race would also develop nearby. Whereas the work of the Fifth Root Race was to develop individuality which had been characterized by competition, the mark of the Sixth Root Race would be unity and brotherhood. Already in the Fifth Root Race there were appearing signs of the greater recognition of the unity of humankind that was to come.¹²²

Besant wrote that in addition to the Manus who made up the "Ruling Department" in the Occult Hierarchy, there was the "Teaching Department" headed by the "Bodhisattva" or "Christ." The Head of the Teaching Department was also called the jagadguru or "World-Teacher." He was called the Bodhisattva because he was the future Buddha. When a Buddha finished his work in one body, he did not return when he left that body. Instead he handed the work over to someone else. When Gautama Buddha, who was the Buddha of Knowledge, left, he appointed the R̥ṣi Maitreya as his successor, who would be the Buddha of Compassion.¹²³ The World-Teacher incarnated at the beginning of every sub-race in order to impart the religious teaching that would become the hallmark of the coming civilization.¹²⁴

Blavatsky had predicted that the new sub-race would develop in southern California, and certain ethnological findings indicated to Annie Besant that this was indeed happening. Since the new sub-race was developing then it was logical to expect the imminent appearance of the World-Teacher. Annie Besant and Charles Leadbeater chose the boy, J. Krishnamurti, to be the physical vehicle that the Lord Maitreya would occupy.

Besant believed that the Theosophical Society was to play a special role in bringing about the realization of the Universal Brotherhood. Those members of the Theosophical Society who could develop sufficiently their intuitional or buddhic qualities and a true sense of brotherhood would be the basis of the sixth sub-race.

The Theosophical Society has been declared to be the Herald of the Coming Age, the seed of the Sixth Root Race, and the cradle of the sixth sub-race now being born into the world.¹²⁵

The Master K.H. had predicted that the Theosophical Society would be "the foundation of the future religions of humanity."¹²⁶ Besant felt that this was particularly significant in regard to the religion that would be taught by the coming World-Teacher. The individual who would become the physical vehicle for the World-Teacher would be raised and trained by the Theosophists as Jesus had been trained by the Essenes. Although Besant often explained that every Theosophist was free to make up his own mind about the World-Teacher, she also stated that "the duty of the Theosophist in Religion to-day is to try to spread the knowledge of the coming of the World-Teacher. . . ."¹²⁷ The World-Teacher's message to the new sub-race and to the whole world would result in the creating of a new civilization based on brotherhood. Thus the evolution of the new sub-race and the subsequent evolution of the new Root Race with their attendant buddhic characteristics and their New Religion based on the World-Teacher's message was the collective means by which human nature would be transformed. Besant's efforts in this regard culminated in her work with the Order of

the Star in the East, in which she effectively created a millenarian movement that anxiously awaited the coming of its messiah. Concurrently, Besant was also working for Home Rule in India which she saw as vital to the attainment of her millennial goal of world brotherhood.¹²⁸ India was to become the spiritual teacher of the world and play a key role in the creation of Universal Brotherhood.

Notes

¹Howard Murphet, When Daylight Comes: A Biography of Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, A Quest Book (Wheaton, IL: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1975), pp. 7-8, 20-26, 29-36, 39, 51, 56-61, 65-73.

²Howard Murphet, Hammer on the Mountain: The Life of Henry Steel Olcott (1832-1907) (Wheaton, IL: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1972), pp. 3-4, 6-23, 26.

³Bruce F. Campbell, Ancient Wisdom Revived: A History of the Theosophical Movement (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), p. 19.

⁴Ibid., p. 20.

⁵Ibid., p. 19.

⁶Ibid., p. 10.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid., p. 11.

⁹Ibid., p. 14.

¹⁰Henry Steel Olcott, Old Diary Leaves: The True Story of the Theosophical Society (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1895), pp. 1-11, 17-20.

¹¹Campbell, pp. 26-29; Josephine Ransom, A Short History of the Theosophical Society (Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1938), pp. 76-82; The Theosophical Movement 1875-1925: A History and a Survey (New York: E. P. Dutton & Company, 1925), pp. 15-16.

¹²Henry Steel Olcott, Inaugural Address of the President of the Theosophical Society, Delivered at Mott Memorial Hall, in the City of New York, at the First Regular Meeting of the Society, November 17th, 1875 (New York: Printed and Electrotyped by Order of the Society, 1875), pp. 2-5.

¹³Olcott, Old Diary Leaves, pp. 209-12.

¹⁴Campbell, p. 33. See also J. N. Farquhar, Modern Religious Movements in India, 1st Indian ed. (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1967), pp. 223-24.

¹⁵Campbell, p. 35; Murphet, When Daylight Comes, p. 103.

¹⁶H. P. Blavatsky, Isis Unveiled, H. P. Blavatsky Collected Writings 1877 (Wheaton, IL: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1972), 2: iv.

¹⁷Ibid., 1: vii.

¹⁸Ibid., 1: vi, xi, xvi-xvii, 584-90.

¹⁹Ibid., 2: 264-65.

²⁰Olcott, Old Diary Leaves, pp. 394-401.

²¹Campbell, pp. 78-81; A. P. Sinnett, The Occult World (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1885); A. P. Sinnett, Esoteric Buddhism (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1884); A. T. Barker, trans. and comp., The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett from the Mahatmas M. & K.H. (London: T. Fisher Unwin Ltd., 1923).

²²Campbell, pp. 83-84, 86; L. A. Wickremeratne, "An American Bodhisattva and an Irish Karmayogin: Reflections on Two European Encounters with Non-Christian Religious Cultures in the Nineteenth Century," Journal of the American Academy of Religion, 50 (June 1982): 240, 242, 244.

²³Farquhar, pp. 232-55. Dora Kunz, immediate past-president of the Theosophical Society in America, reported in the July 1986 issue of The American Theosophist that Dr. Vernon Harrison, a modern-day member of the Society for Psychical Research and a handwriting expert, had made a study of the letters that Madame Coulomb claimed were written by Blavatsky as well as the Mahatma Letters. His report in the S.P.R. Journal (Volume 53, April 1986) concluded that the incriminating letters produced by Madame Coulomb were forgeries, and that the Mahatma Letters, i.e., those letters many Theosophists believe were written by the Masters of Wisdom, were not written by Blavatsky. See Dora Kunz, "HPB Vindicated by Society for Psychical Research in England," The American Theosophist 74 (July 1986): 226-27.

²⁴Campbell, pp. 95-100; Countess Constance Wachtmeister et al., Reminiscences of H. P. Blavatsky and The Secret Doctrine, A Quest Book (Wheaton, IL: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1976), pp. xi, 37-38.

²⁵The Theosophical Movement, pp. 153-54.

²⁶H. P. Blavatsky, "First Preliminary Memorandum," The Theosophical Movement 1875-1925: A History and a Survey, (New York: E. P. Dutton & Company, 1925), p. 175.

²⁷Ibid., p. 174.

²⁸The Theosophical Movement, pp. 226-74.

²⁹Wachtmeister et al., pp. 11, 13, 25-27, 29, 33-34, 39-40, 43, 81, 84-85.

³⁰Farquhar, pp. 262-63; Campbell, p. 41.

³¹"THE SECRET DOCTRINE: The Synthesis of Science, Religion and Philosophy by H. P. Blavatsky, Author of 'Isis Unveiled.' With a copious Index and a Glossary of Terms," H. P. Blavatsky, The Secret Doctrine, H. P. Blavatsky Collected Writings 1888 (Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1978), 1: 51.

³²William Doss McDavid, An Introduction to Esoteric Principles (Wheaton, IL: The Department of Education, The Theosophical Society in America, 1977), p. 81.

³³Blavatsky, Isis Unveiled, 1: 351; Olcott, Old Diaries Leaves, pp. 278-80, 283-85, 288.

³⁴H. P. Blavatsky, The Key to Theosophy, 3d rev. English ed. (London: The Theosophical Publishing Society, 1893), p. 123.

³⁵Esther Bright, Old Memories and Letters of Annie Besant (London: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1936), p. 20.

³⁶Annie Besant, The Pedigree of Man, new ed., (Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1943), p. 13.

³⁷Annie Besant, Psychology (Hollywood: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1919), p. 1.

³⁸Annie Besant, "Why I Became a Theosophist," in A Selection of the Social and Political Pamphlets of Annie Besant, John Saville, ed. (New York: Augustus M. Kelley, Publishers, 1970), p. 18.

³⁹Annie Besant, "An Introduction to Theosophy," in Theosophical Essays (London: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1895), p. 6.

⁴⁰Besant, "Why I Became a Theosophist," p. 14.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, p. 13.

⁴²Annie Besant, In Defense of Theosophy (London: Theosophical Publishing Society, n.d.), pp. 6-7.

⁴³*Ibid.*, pp. 9, 11.

⁴⁴Annie Besant, Duties of the Theosophist (Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1917), p. 10.

⁴⁵Annie Besant, Superhuman Men in History and in Religion (Hollywood: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1919), p. 93.

⁴⁶Annie Besant, "The Brotherhood of Religions," Introduction, The Theosophist 32 (October 1910): 25.

⁴⁷Annie Besant, "The Brotherhood of Religions," Chapter 2, The Theosophist 32 (November 1910): 186-87.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 188-89.

⁴⁹Annie Besant, ed., The Universal Text Book of Religion and Morals, Part I, 3d ed. (Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1962), pp. 58-60.

⁵⁰Annie Besant, "The Work of the Theosophical Society in India," in Adyar Popular Lectures 1-12 (N.p., n.d.), p. 2.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, pp. 2-3.

⁵²Besant, "An Introduction to Theosophy," p. 6.

⁵³Annie Besant, "Why You Should Be a Theosophist," in Theosophical Essays (London: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1895), p. 5.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 5-7.

⁵⁵Annie Besant, "The Brotherhood of Religions," Chapter 5, The Theosophist 32 (December 1910): 327.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 328.

⁵⁷Annie Besant, In the Outer Court, American ed. (Chicago: The Theosophical Press, 1923), pp. 93-96.

⁵⁸Besant, Duties of the Theosophist, p. 25.

⁵⁹Besant, In the Outer Court, p. 96.

⁶⁰Besant, "The Brotherhood of Religions," Chapter 5, p. 328.

⁶¹Ibid., p. 330.

⁶²Ibid., p. 331.

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Blavatsky, The Key to Theosophy, p. 37.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 137.

⁶⁶Ibid., pp. 137-38.

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 157.

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 158.

⁶⁹Ibid., p. 159.

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 160.

⁷¹H. P. Blavatsky, trans., The Voice of the Silence: Being Chosen Fragments from the "Book of the Golden Precepts." For the Daily Use of Lanoos (Disciple)., 2d Quest Book Miniature ed. (Wheaton, IL: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1973), p. 42.

⁷²Ibid., p. 53.

⁷³Besant, "An Introduction to Theosophy," p. 6.

⁷⁴Annie Besant, Theosophy (London: T. C. and E. C. Jack, n.d.), p. 12; Annie Besant, "The Work of the Theosophical Society in India," pp. 3-4.

⁷⁵Besant, Theosophy, p. 12.

⁷⁶Besant, "An Introduction to Theosophy," p. 7.

⁷⁷Besant, "Why You Should Be a Theosophist," pp. 4-5.

⁷⁸Besant, The Universal Text Book, Part I, p. 161.

⁷⁹Ibid.

⁸⁰Ibid., pp. 161-62.

⁸¹Ibid., p. 162.

⁸²Besant, "Why I Became a Theosophist," p. 14.

⁸³Annie Besant, "The Sphinx of Theosophy," in Theosophical Essays (London: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1895), p. 19.

⁸⁴Annie Besant, The Great Plan (Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1921), p. 15; Besant, The Pedigree of Man, p. 37.

⁸⁵Annie Besant, A Study in Consciousness, 6th ed. (Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1972), pp. 48-49, 71; Annie Besant, The Riddle of Life, and How Theosophy Answers It (London: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1911), p. 20; Annie Besant, Death--and After (London: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1914), p. 13; Annie Besant, The Ancient Wisdom, 7th Adyar ed. (Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1966), p. 192.

⁸⁶Besant, The Riddle of Life, p. 21.

⁸⁷Besant, The Ancient Wisdom, pp. 185.

⁸⁸Besant, The Riddle of Life, p. 21.

⁸⁹Besant, The Ancient Wisdom, p. 182.

⁹⁰Ibid., p. 183; Besant, The Riddle of Life, p. 21.

⁹¹Annie Besant, Man and His Bodies, 10th ed. (Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1952), pp. 66-67.

⁹²Ibid., pp. 76-77, 80-82; Besant, Psychology, p. 81; Besant, The Riddle of Life, p. 22.

⁹³Besant, Man and His Bodies, pp. 66-70, 76-77, 79-80.

⁹⁴Besant, The Universal Text Book, Part I, p. 148.

⁹⁵Besant, Man and His Bodies, p. 41.

⁹⁶Besant, Psychology, p. 116.

⁹⁷Besant, Man and His Bodies, pp. 42-43; Annie Besant, Man's Life in This and Other Worlds (Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1913), p. 29.

⁹⁸Besant, Man and His Bodies, p. 52.

⁹⁹Besant, The Universal Text Book, Part I, pp. 141-42.

¹⁰⁰Annie Besant, The Self and Its Sheaths (Adyar, Madras: The Theosophist Office, 1912), p. 58; Besant, Death--and After, pp. 12, 25.

¹⁰¹Besant, The Universal Text Book, Part I, p. 141.

¹⁰²Annie Besant, The Masters as Facts and Ideals (London: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1895), pp. 32-33.

¹⁰³Annie Besant, The Masters (Chicago: The Theosophical Press, n.d.), p. 77.

¹⁰⁴Annie Besant, "Is Belief in the Masters Superstitious or Harmful?" The Theosophist 35 (December 1913): 341-43.

¹⁰⁵Besant, The Masters, pp. 84-85.

¹⁰⁶Besant, The Ancient Wisdom, pp. 131-32.

¹⁰⁷Besant, The Universal Text Book, Part I, p. 163.

¹⁰⁸Besant, Theosophy, p. 70.

¹⁰⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 70-71.

¹¹⁰Annie Besant, Initiation: The Perfecting of Man (Chicago: The Theosophical Press, 1923), pp. 28-29, 32.

- ¹¹¹Ibid., pp. 47-49.
- ¹¹²Ibid., pp. 50-54; Besant, The Riddle of Life, p. 54.
- ¹¹³Besant, The Riddle of Life, p. 54.
- ¹¹⁴Besant, Initiation, p. 54.
- ¹¹⁵Ibid., pp. 54-55.
- ¹¹⁶Besant, Theosophy, pp. 70-71.
- ¹¹⁷Besant, The Pedigree of Man, pp. 37-40.
- ¹¹⁸Besant, The Great Plan, p. 66; Annie Besant, Evolution and Man's Destiny, (London: The Theosophical Society in England, 1924), pp. 45, 51; Besant, The Pedigree of Man, pp. 101-4, 109, 115-16, 118, 162, 167-68, 176-77, 203-7.
- ¹¹⁹Besant, Evolution and Man's Destiny, pp. 45, 57-58, 86.
- ¹²⁰Ibid., pp. 55-56.
- ¹²¹Ibid., p. 58.
- ¹²²Ibid., pp. 94-97, 138; Besant, Psychology, pp. 88-93.
- ¹²³Besant, The Riddle of Life, p. 57; Besant, The Great Plan, p. 76.
- ¹²⁴Besant, Evolution and Man's Destiny, p. 124.
- ¹²⁵Annie Besant, "The Wider Outlook," The Theosophist 38 (November 1916): 136.
- ¹²⁶Besant, "An Introduction to Theosophy," p. 11.
- ¹²⁷Besant, Duties of the Theosophist, p. 16.
- ¹²⁸Besant, "The Wider Outlook," p. 134.

CHAPTER VI

Annie Besant and India

India's Mission to the World

Annie Besant believed that India was destined to play a key role in the attainment of her millennial dream, the establishment of a new civilization in which true brotherhood would be a reality.¹ A nation, like an individual human being, was a fragment of the Divine Life. Like an individual, each nation had its own past history and karma which influenced its present. Each nation had its own temperament and character and should be free to evolve its character to perfection without having a foreign character imposed on it by another nation. Each nation had its part to play in the great plan of evolution, and the individuality of each nation would be united ultimately in a harmonious whole that would encompass all the nations of the earth.²

Besant was fond of quoting Mazzini as saying "God has written a line of His thought over the cradle of every people. That is its special mission. It cannot be cancelled; it must be freely developed."³ India's mission was to be the spiritual teacher of the world. India would present the philosophical basis of brotherhood to the world and hence become the spiritual leader of the new civilization. India's message consisted of "the Oneness of Spirit" and therefore "the Solidarity of Mankind."⁴ The brotherhood of humanity was "based on the essential truth that in every man resides a fragment of the Divine Life. . . ."⁵

In order to become the spiritual teacher of the new civilization, it was destined that India should come temporarily under the rule of Great Britain. English was becoming a world-language and would be the

means of disseminating the spiritual truths of India.⁶ In addition, the two countries had developed their individual characteristics to an excessive degree, and close contact between Great Britain and India was necessary to bring about a correction of the excess.

The old Greek teaching that the excess or the deficiency of a virtue is a vice, has been demonstrated in India; the doctrine of Dharma, duty, obligation, had been carried to excess, and ill-judged submission to wrongly exercised authority had led to tyranny on one side and servility on the other; the National character had thereby deteriorated, the strong had grasped privileges and rejected duties, and the weak, yielding to injustice, had undermined the virility of the people. Britain, on the other hand, had asserted Rights and neglected the corresponding duties, and was well on the road to anarchy; arrogance had taken the place of responsibility, and pride of wealth, divorced from social obligations, was leading her towards the fatal path of the denial of the Law of Brotherhood. The crisis has now been reached; India has learnt her lesson and is asserting her Right to Freedom; has Britain learnt hers, the Duty of respecting the Rights of others, without regard to color or Nationality?⁷

Besant believed that the process of evolution tended to "bring about aggregations of separate entities into organic wholes. . . ." ⁸ She felt that India and Great Britain as individual nations were destined to become the leading members of an Indo-

British Commonwealth uniting colored and white nations, "wherein Justice shall reign instead of Power, and Law shall put an end to Violence."⁹ The Indo-British Commonwealth would be a major step toward a World Federation of all nations. Since a nation embodied a "collective Will," it could choose to accept or reject the opportunity to play a given role in the divine plan,¹⁰ and Besant urged that Great Britain and India cooperate with the tendency of evolution to bring about greater aggregations of individual entities.¹¹

Once India was an equal partner with Britain in the Commonwealth, both nations would make a contribution to other nations in terms of those same characteristics that each had previously developed to an excessive degree. Britain would contribute her "ideal of Liberty, of Individuality, of Resistance to tyranny."¹² India would contribute her spirituality which Besant saw as consisting of the idea that all were part of a unity. Knowledge of this concept would enable people to realize their social interdependence and perform action as duty owed to the whole.¹³

Unless Great Britain and India united as equal partners in an Indo-British Commonwealth, Besant feared that a "war of colour" would break out between white and colored nations.¹⁴ The fate of the whole world depended on India, and India must be linked to Great Britain as an equal partner to assure the world's progress.¹⁵ India would become the Holy Land of the world.¹⁶

Besant believed that the evolution of nations was guided by the Occult Hierarchy which included within itself devas and ṛṣis (Masters).¹⁷ Besant believed that her work in India was under the direct guidance of members of the Occult Hierarchy. She saw her work in

India as divided into four successive but overlapping stages. First, it was necessary to revive the self-respect of the indigenous religions in order to make them the basis for feelings of national pride and dignity. Besant put a special emphasis on Hinduism in this regard. She began her efforts to raise Hindu pride in 1893 and saw herself as continuing work started by the Brahmo Samaj, the Arya Samaj, and the founders of the Theosophical Society. Secondly, it was necessary to provide an education to Indian youth that would teach them their native faiths and encourage national pride. Besant founded the Central Hindu College and School which later became the nucleus of the Benares Hindu University. She also founded various schools that were administered by the Theosophical Educational Trust. Besant reported that in 1913 she came into conscious contact with the Ṛṣi Agastya, the Regent of India, who instructed her to work in the third area, social reform. She lectured on Indian social problems, such as child marriage, seclusion of women, caste and untouchability. She also formed the Brothers of Service, consisting of those individuals willing to defy wrong social customs.¹⁸ Besant reported that shortly afterwards she was summoned in her astral body to Shamballa, the hidden seat of the occult government in the Gobi Desert. There the King who guided evolution on this planet gave Besant her "marching orders" concerning the fourth area of activity, political work to achieve Home Rule for India.

You will have a time of trouble and danger. I need not say: have no fear; but have no anxiety. Do not let opposition become angry. Be firm but not provocative.

Press steadily the preparation for the coming changes, and claim India's place in the Empire. The end will be a great triumph. Do not let it be stained by excess. Remember that you represent in the outer world the Regent, who is My Agent. My Hand will be over you, and My Peace with you.¹⁹

Annie Besant was only too glad to work for the welfare of India. She reiterated over and over again that in her heart she was Hindu and considered India to be her true Motherland. She felt that her strong feelings for India were due to many past Indian incarnations.²⁰

. . . I know her [India] by my own incarnated past, and by the love of India, that makes me reckon nothing worth having in comparison with her service. I know her, I love her, I worship her, as I know and love and worship no other country on the surface of the earth, and therefore I would fain see her what she can be, what she is in reality. . . .²¹

The reality that India was for Besant was that of a nation leading the rest of the world in spirituality. The philosophy of India would become the religious outlook of the new civilization and the basis of that civilization's spirit of brotherhood. The partnership of India and Great Britain in an Indo-British Commonwealth would be the first step toward a World Federation of all nations in which brotherhood would be a reality.

The Importance of Hinduism

Annie Besant believed that a vigorous national life must be based on a country's indigenous religions. Since all the world's religions were represented in India, India had a great opportunity to demonstrate to the world that religious unity could be actualized by members of each faith recognizing the common elements of all religions and establishing bonds of friendship and brotherhood with one another. The Divine Wisdom or Theosophy provided the doctrinal elements of the unity of all religions.²²

Besant believed that wherever a lessening of religious faith occurred, the nation would experience a decline in vigor and prosperity. She saw her task and that of the Theosophical Society as reviving various aspects of religious faith. One specific way Theosophy was reviving religious faith was in the reintroduction of the concept of reincarnation to western Christian thought. Another way could be seen in Col. Olcott's work to revive Buddhism in Ceylon. Besant felt that it was her particular mission to revive Hinduism in India. Once spirituality was revived in India, then intellectual power and material prosperity would follow.²³ Besant believed that Hinduism was in a state of decline because the educated Indian male was no longer proud of his heritage, but followed the thought of John Stuart Mill, Huxley, and Spencer and tended to be agnostic.²⁴

Besant felt that she needed to emphasize the importance of Hindu thought in Indian life over the other religions found in India.

It was necessary, because, alike in the sublimity of its spirituality and the intellectual splendour of its philosophy,

Hinduism stands supreme among the religions of the world. To realise this supremacy was to establish National self-respect, and to see India, in religion and philosophy, as the teacher, not the pupil, of the West.²⁵

Besant believed that Indian patriotism must be based on pride in the Indian religions and cultural heritage.

There was no progress possible for any form of human activity if the roots of that activity were not struck deep in the ocean of spiritual life. There was no possibility of National spirit in the country without self-respect being the very basis of the Nation, and therefore it was necessary to hold up the great ideal of the past India, mighty in intellect, mighty in religion and in physical prosperity.²⁶

To this effect Besant lectured widely to Indian audiences emphasizing the greatness of Hindu thought, and the past greatness and prosperity of Hindu civilization.

Besant felt that Hinduism was a very significant religion since it was the religion delivered to the first Aryan sub-race. The Hindu religion, philosophy, science, and polity were delivered to the first sub-race by members of the Occult Hierarchy, including the Manu of the Aryan race and ṛṣis of ancient India. The first Aryan sub-race "was fitted to be the custodian of the polity, of the philosophy, of the sciences, of the exoteric religion, and so mark out once for all what ought to be the typical development of the Aryan race."²⁷ Hinduism was the religion that most fully expressed the Divine Wisdom, or the core

teachings of all religions that were found in Theosophy.²⁸

Besant found in Hinduism the doctrines that were basic to her Theosophy and to her millenarian goal. The Upaniṣads in particular confirmed her monistic view of the world on which her desire for world brotherhood was based. "The lesson of the Upanishads is that there is one Self, the 'One without a second,' that the Self abides in all."²⁹ Besant believed that India's great message to the world was the teaching that there was one Self, one Consciousness, in which all individual selves were rooted. This would be India's message to the coming civilization.

That is the teaching which, spoken by the mouth of India, is spreading over the whole world, and behold! that is the very key-note of the race that is to be born. That race will recognise the spiritual unity of all humanity. Therefore is that unity the one obligatory object of the Theosophical Society, the recognition of the Brotherhood of man, which can only be defended on the ground of a spiritual unity.³⁰

Annie Besant identified the Sanskrit term Īśvara with the Theosophical term Logos. There was but One Existence, and that was named Brahman in the Upaniṣads. There was nirguṇa Brahman and saṅguṇa Brahman, unmanifested Brahman and Brahman in manifestation. An Īśvara was a great "Centre of Consciousness" within the One Existence. The Īśvara was part of the saṅguṇa Brahman. There were countless Īśvaras and they could be ranked. There were Īśvaras of universes, solar systems, and planets.³¹

Referring to the Yoga Vāsīṣṭha as well as to the Upaniṣads, Besant taught that an Īśvara could merge itself in the consciousness of Brahman or limit itself to its own self-consciousness. When the Īśvara limited its attention to its own self-consciousness or memory, its powers were thrown into activity and this was māyā or manifestation. The Īśvara sent forth its breath which fell on the enveloping māyā and caused māyā to become mūlaprakṛti, the root of matter. The triple vibratory effect of the Life Breath caused matter to have three modifications: tamas, inertia or stability; rajas, activity or vigor; and sattva, which Besant translated as harmony. Every particle of the manifested universe contained these three guṇas in some combination.³²

Besant identified the Sanskrit term jīvātma with the Theosophical term Monad. A jīvātma was "consciousness plus matter" or the Self in its material sheaths.³³ The jīvātma corresponded to the Theosophical Immortal Triad, Ātmā-Buddhi-Manas. It was an individual consciousness separated from yet contained within the Īśvara.³⁴ Although individual human jīvātmas suffered under the illusion of separate individuality, the evolution of the intuitive or buddhic faculty would enable the direct perception of the essential oneness of all and the actualization of brotherhood.

Annie Besant found in Hinduism confirmation of her belief in evolution, now explicitly defined as "the gradual unfolding of the inner powers of the life, the Self"³⁵ She quoted passages from the second āraṇyaka of the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa to give a description of the Self evolving through vegetable, animal and human forms. Besant felt that the doctrine of the

unfolding of the Self was the "great truth without which Evolution, as taught in the West, remains incomplete and unintelligible."³⁶

The means of the evolution of the Self was through the process of reincarnation. Reincarnation continued until the sense of separateness was completely overcome. Besant quoted the Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad as saying "Whoever sees variety in Him proceeds from death to death," and the Kaṭha Upaniṣad as saying "He proceeds from death to death who beholdeth difference."³⁷ Besant saw Theosophy as correcting the modern Indian notion that karma was "fate to be endured." Through the correct understanding of the operation of the natural laws of Karma and Sacrifice, one could learn to control one's evolution. Besant quoted Bhīṣma of the Mahābhārata as saying "exertion is greater than destiny."³⁸

In Hindu thought, Annie Besant found the means by which an individual could develop the faculties by which the unity underlying all existence could be perceived. The science of yoga provided a method by which a human being might hasten his own evolution or unfolding consciousness and come into union with the One Existence.³⁹

There were three paths contained within the science of yoga: karma-mārga ending in karma-yoga; jñāna-mārga ending in jñāna-yoga; and bhakti-mārga ending in bhakti-yoga. Karma-mārga was the path of action. The individual practicing karma-mārga restrained the senses and was self denying. He meditated daily, and used everyday life as an opportunity to maintain concentration and balance amid distraction. Finally he began to practice karma-yoga where he acted without desiring the fruits of his

action. The supreme culmination of the path of karma-yoga was when the person began to act solely to do the will of Īśvara. The ahaṁkāra or sense of separate I-ness would be destroyed at this point and the person would become filled with jñāna and bhakti, for at the goal the three paths became one.⁴⁰

A person following jñāna-mārga developed his intellect by study throughout many incarnations. Finally, tiring of mere knowledge, he would begin to seek permanent truth.

Then he must develop viveka, discrimination between the real and the unreal; vairāgya, disgust for the unreal; shatsampatti, the six mental qualifications--shama, control of the mind; dama, control of the body; uparati, wide-minded tolerance; titiksha, endurance; shraddha, faith; samādhāna, balance; he must have mumuksha, the longing for liberation from the transitory; and then, with all these, he is the Adhikāraṇ, the man fitted to receive initiation into Yoga.⁴¹

Then he would follow jñāna-yoga, perceiving the valuelessness of the transitory world and living the life of the parivrājaka, the wanderer. A deeper perception would enable him to see the permanent reality and he would live the life of the kutīcaka, the dweller in the hut. He would rise above the consciousness of the superficial ego and perceive his unity with the One Existence.⁴²

Bhakti-mārga was attractive to the person drawn toward the worship of a manifested aspect of God. The worshipper would begin to take on the qualities of the object of devotion. He would attain to non-attachment by giving up attachment to lower things by the all-

consuming attachment to his chosen deity. Finally, the worshipper would feel himself at one with the object of worship.⁴³

These three paths tended to blend in the higher stages, because the karma-yogin, the jñānin, and the bhakta each took on the qualities inherent in the other paths. In the end all three paths were marked by service or self-sacrifice. The sense of separateness would disappear and all action would be seen as the action of the Divine Will.⁴⁴ In the later stages of these paths the individual always would be guided by a guru. The guru might be a jīvanmukta, one who was liberated and still living in a physical body, or he might be a videhamukta, one who was liberated and lived in the higher realms and did not have a gross physical body.⁴⁵

In addition to these three yogas, there was rāja yoga and hatha yoga. Rāja yoga "seeks to control the changes in consciousness, and by this control to rule the material vehicles."⁴⁶ Following the Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali, Besant described how the purpose of rāja yoga or meditation was to get consciousness beyond the mental modifications to the equilibrium of puruṣa. When discussing Patañjali, Besant was aware that his thought followed the Sāṃkhya system of philosophy which was significantly different from what she called Vedānta with which she closely identified Theosophy. Sāṃkhya postulated two eternal principles, puruṣa and prakṛti, spirit and matter. There were many puruṣas or individual units of consciousness, and they all were characterized by awareness, life, and immutability. Propinquity of puruṣa to prakṛti, matter, disturbed the equilibrium of prakṛti and it was thrown into a state of activity. Puruṣa did not act but was merely a

spectator. The goal of Saṃkhya was to get beyond the false identification with prakṛti or material existence to the consciousness of the true self, the unchanging puruṣa. Besant found this description of the puruṣa very useful in understanding the Theosophical concept of the Monad. The Monad dwelt beyond the five lower planes of the universe and was untouched by change. However, Theosophy taught that the Monad appropriated matter on the lower, more physical, planes and acted through that. Besant felt that the thought she identified as Vedānta was a loftier conception than Saṃkhya. There was one conscious Self and the diversity of matter arose when the Self imagined limitation. There was only one actor, and that was the Self who acted by appropriating the matter created by his own Self-limitation.⁴⁷

The final yoga, hatha yoga, "seeks to control the vibrations of matter, and by this control to evoke the desired changes in consciousness."⁴⁸ Besant saw hatha yoga as very limited in that it could have no effect beyond the astral plane. The physical control gained through the practice of hatha yoga could have beneficial effects on health. However, attempts to control the brain centers connected with ordinary and super-ordinary consciousness could result in disastrous effects for the individual's evolution.⁴⁹

Moving from techniques for individual evolution, Besant found corroboration in Hinduism of Theosophical teachings concerning the evolution of humanity as a whole. She felt that the Purāṇas gave information concerning the evolution of the seven Root Races as well as the seismic changes in the earth's surface that accompany the evolution of the races.⁵⁰

Annie Besant found much in Hinduism to corroborate her favorite theme, the Law of Sacrifice as the law governing the unfolding of the spirit and defined as "the outpouring of life for the benefit of others. . . ." ⁵¹ According to Besant, all religions taught that the manifested universe was the result of a voluntary self-sacrifice or self-limitation of the Divine. In Hinduism, Besant cited the Puruṣa Sūkta in the Ṛgveda which described the sacrifice of the cosmic person to create the manifested world. Besant's interpretation of the Bhagavad-Gītā emphasized self-sacrifice in the sense of action done for the sake of carrying out the Divine Will. Besant felt that the caste system in its original form was designed to teach individuals their duty to the whole of society in order to be a training-ground in learning self-sacrifice or service. When the sūdra or member of the servant class learned to serve, the next lesson as a vaiśya or member of the merchant class was to give and be charitable. The kshatriya or warrior must learn to sacrifice life itself. The brāhmaṇa class was not meant to enjoy special privileges, but to be the ultimate servants of society by functioning as religious teachers. Related to caste in India was the concept of dharma, which Besant translated as duty. Dharma was the keynote of Hindu civilization. Duties were the obligations owed to those around us and varied according to age, education, sex, occupation, and position in society. Duty was the obligation of the part to the whole and as such was another version of the Law of Sacrifice or service. ⁵²

Thus Besant lectured widely to arouse Hindus' pride in their native faith so that it could become the basis of their patriotism. She saw Hinduism as the

world religion that most fully expressed the Divine Wisdom or Theosophy that would be the basis of the future Universal Brotherhood to be manifested in the New Civilization. In particular Besant was attracted to Indian monistic concepts, the doctrine of reincarnation, the various types of yogas as methods to transform human nature on an individual basis, and finally Indian teachings that corroborated Besant's favorite theme of service or self-sacrifice. In the revival of Hinduism and the uplift of Indian pride, Annie Besant saw education as an important tool.

Education

Annie Besant believed that the purpose of education was to train and develop the individual's inherent capacities and talents brought to this life from past incarnations. In speaking on education Besant emphasized the divisions of the human organism found in Theosophy. Education should build up the physical body and make it healthy and strong. Education should develop the emotions and in particular teach morality based on "religion," the teaching of the one unity underlying all things. Finally, education should train the mind in the exercise of all its powers and not be limited to mere rote learning. An education of this sort would bring the lower physical vehicles under the control of the Monad, and the individual would devote himself to the service of family, friends, community, nation, and the world.⁵³ In other words, the ultimate purpose of education was "To make the man a good Citizen of a free and spiritual Commonwealth of Humanity."⁵⁴

Besant wrote that in the past India possessed an admirable system of education. Every village had a school where the children learned reading, writing, and math. The simplest materials were used, and the children would write their letters and numbers in the sand. Besant cited reports of British observers that in the early nineteenth century every village had a school, and that there were many Toles and Madrasahs (high schools) and Pathashalas and Maktabas (schools attached to temples and mosques), as well as colleges.⁵⁵

Annie Besant felt that the people of a nation could best provide the proper education of their children. British rule and British education had caused the widespread illiteracy in India. She saw the British destruction of the Indian Village System as causing the rapid decline of Indian schools. "The cultivators who had had shares in the common land were turned into rent-paying peasants by a tax on their holdings, and could not afford to pay a schoolmaster in their impoverished condition. . . ." ⁵⁶

English education denationalized Indian boys. They were taught in the English language and not their vernacular, and they studied English literature and history while remaining ignorant of Indian literature and history. Education in government schools omitted religious education and missionary schools, and of course, provided study of Christian doctrines. Since relatively few Indian boys became Christian converts as a result of attending a missionary school, Besant pointed out that the result of the education received in both kinds of schools was to cut the boys off from their religious heritage and to increase the spread of scientific materialism.⁵⁷

The main benefit that Besant saw accruing from English education was that the study of English history and literature introduced Indian boys to the English ideal of Liberty, and thus the education imparted by the British government contained the seeds of its own destruction since these boys would soon want liberty for their own country.⁵⁸

As stated above, Annie Besant strongly felt that it was the duty of parents, community leaders, and patriots to do the work necessary to provide education to the children of a nation. It should not be left up solely to the government or even educational experts. An education truly fitted to the needs of India could not be created until Indians governed their own country. Besant pointed out that a greater percentage of children attended school in the Indian States than in British India. Until Home Rule could be achieved, Besant had a number of suggestions concerning things that Indians could do to educate their children. On the village level, she urged that where co-operative societies existed, they should take a small percentage of their profit and use it to form a school for children. She also urged that village pañchāyats or councils be created that would take on the task of creating schools. In the cities, she urged people to get their Municipalities to act in opening free schools. She particularly urged Indian Theosophists to do their duty and give either their time or money in providing education to Indian children. Besant pointed out that if Indians could afford to donate money to restore and decorate temples and to support large numbers of able-bodied mendicants who were not truly saṃnyāsis, then they could afford to donate money to educate India's children. She felt that it was

necessary for the people of India to create a "National System of Education" operating alongside the present government educational system. In her own work at the Central Hindu College, she pointed out that the large majority of the members of the Board were Indians, and that she acted only in an advisory capacity. In her Commonwealth of India Bill, primary education and village libraries would have been in the hands of the village council, the pañchāyat. The sub-district council would have controlled lower secondary or middle schools and model farms, the district council would have controlled high schools, colleges, and technical colleges, and the Provincial Legislative Council would have had charge of universities, technical institutes, libraries, museums, and zoological gardens.⁵⁹

Annie Besant gave further specific advice concerning the curriculum for boys and girls, and the education of the depressed classes. For the purposes of this book it is not necessary to examine these in detail. It should be noted, however, that her opinions concerning languages to be taught had a direct bearing on her thought concerning the unity of India as a nation as well as the importance of a religious education. She felt that every child should be educated in his vernacular. In addition, he should study English as this was becoming a language that was used all over the world as well as in India. She felt that Hindi should be studied and should become the official language of India. She recognized that this would create a hardship for Tamil- and Telegu-speaking people, but she felt that this was a sacrifice they should make for the unity of India. In addition, each child should study the classical language related to

his own religious tradition, whether it was Sanskrit, Arabic, or Persian.⁶⁰

Annie Besant strongly felt that in addition to a modern, scientific education coupled with a good grounding in Indian history, geography, and literature, each Indian child should receive a religious education appropriate to the religion of his family. This religious education should be imparted by a member of that faith. She felt that religious training was necessary in order to teach the child about the unity underlying all things. She believed that since all religions taught about the One Existence then religious teaching was necessary in order to teach morality and to provide a basis for moral action. Religious education would help the child overcome the sense of separateness, and the sense of unity would be expressed in terms of "Love of God" and "Service of Man."⁶¹

Besant felt that generally it was not advisable to educate children of different faiths at the same institution. After the individual was strengthened in his own religion as a child and youth, then as an adult he would be able to come together with members of other faiths and recognize their common bond as Indians.⁶²

While recognizing that even within each religion in India there existed many different schools of thought, Besant did feel that it was possible to pull out the core teachings of a religion on which all members could agree. At the Central Hindu College the boys would gather daily to chant the Bhagavad-Gītā and listen to a pandit expound stories from the Ramāyana, the Mahābhārata, and the Purāṇas. Besant compiled a series of textbooks on the Sanātana-Dharma or what she saw as the central Hindu teachings free from all sectarian differences. She submitted the books to

leading Hindus and received their approval. The textbooks were used in the schools of several Indian states. In the advanced textbook intended for the use of college students, the section entitled "Basic Hindu Religious Ideas" contained chapters on the One Existence, the Many, Rebirth, Karma, Sacrifice, and the Worlds--Visible and Invisible. There were subsequent sections on "General Hindu Religious Customs and Rites" and "Ethical Teachings." Besant felt that similar textbooks could and should be written for other faiths.⁶³

Annie Besant wanted to see the doctrines of the "Universal Religion" taught to all school children. These doctrines were the Unity of God; the manifestation of God in the universe under three Aspects; the hierarchies of spiritual beings; incarnation of spirit; the laws of Karma and Sacrifice; the three worlds of human evolution; and the Brotherhood of Man.⁶⁴

For Besant the education of children and young people was a tool by which the Theosophical doctrines supporting the concept of Universal Brotherhood could be inculcated. She felt that these doctrines were at the core of all world religions and could be taught in a nonsectarian manner to the children of all faiths. Since she believed that only a religious education could provide the basis of the new civilization of brotherhood, Besant at this time was opposed to secular education as she had supported it as a member of the London School Board. Besant also felt that an education divorced from the native Indian faiths was causing the denationalization of young Indians, so she felt that a return to a curriculum suited for Indians was necessary to promote the attitudes of patriotism needed to lead to Indian Home Rule. These convictions

led Besant to undertake much practical work in the founding of schools in India and the developing of curriculum, the most outstanding example being the Central Hindu College which became the nucleus of the Benares Hindu University.

Social Reform

Annie Besant felt that the purpose of social reform or Service to our Brethren was "the removal of the obstacles which stand in the way of the realisation of Human Brotherhood, the Brotherhood which overleaps all obstacles to clasp a brother's hand."⁶⁵ Those who saw the One Existence in all persons were motivated to help those in whom the divine spark was the most obscured.

The inspiration to Social Reform springs from the longing to clear away the obstacles of ignorance, of physical, emotional and mental filth, of brutal instincts, of criminal tendencies, that prevent in him the shining through of that Spirit in man, who is a spark of the Divine Fire.⁶⁶

Annie Besant wrote that the law of human evolution was the Law of the Family which was another way of expressing the concept of the Law of Sacrifice. The Law of the Family dictated that the weakest members of human society were to be cared for and protected, regardless of whether the weakness was due to extreme youth or extreme old age, defectiveness in body or mind, or sickness. Besant quoted T. H. Huxley, her former science teacher, as saying "The Law of the survival of the fittest is the Law of Evolution for the

brute; the Law of Self-Sacrifice is the Law of Evolution for the man."⁶⁷

Besant felt that social reform was particularly important for India if India was to fulfill her calling to be the spiritual teacher of the world. She urged that India adapt herself to "the spirit of the age" by which Besant meant "the divine impulse carrying man along the road of evolution."⁶⁸ "The spirit of the age" was the divine will of Īśvara and must be studied to determine the direction evolution was taking. If the divine will was resisted and no change was made, India would be left behind in evolution and would become a dead civilization. Too much change would be just as disastrous for then India would lose those characteristics which made her unique.

But while preserving India's type and India's spirituality, we should weave into India's national life everything good, everything valuable that every other nation has to give, everything of value that modern progress has acquired; we should choose and discriminate, take what is good and reject what is evil; neither become westernised by swallowing everything that the West has, without regard to India's type; nor become a dead fossil, interesting to the geologists of the future, bearing no part in the living evolution of the race.⁶⁹

Annie Besant lectured widely concerning specific social reforms in India. She spoke out against early marriage saying that a boy should not be married while he was a student and a girl should not be married and forced to bear children while she was not yet physically mature enough to do so. Besant warned that the

vitality of the Indian race was being lowered as a consequence of sickly children being born of child-parents. The child-parents suffered in health as well. The boy who was a father and a student was often physically weak and mentally and emotionally exhausted. Fathers who married their daughters at a young age were murderers since many of these girls died from the strain of child-bearing.⁷⁰

Related to Besant's desire to see Hinduism uplifted was her wish to see reforms among Hindu priests. She described how many priests were uneducated, some not knowing Sanskrit (in South India), or how to properly conduct the ceremonies. They led impure lives and were motivated by greed rather than a desire to serve. Besant felt that this could be remedied through education. Boys studying for the priesthood should receive a western education in addition to a Sanskrit education. She recommended that mahants and pandits form an official body exercising the power to exclude from office any unworthy priest.⁷¹

Besant's thoughts on caste were closely related to her ideal of brotherhood. When Besant first came to India she was a defender of the caste system. She felt that the four castes or varṇas were natural social divisions according to different distributions of qualities making people suited for different vocations. These vocational distinctions were found in all countries, and India's caste system and emphasis on dharma or duty was an expression of brotherhood in that each person's duty to all others was clearly spelled out.⁷²

Besant wrote that the institution of the four varṇas, meaning "color," was not a part of the Aryan culture when the Aryans first came to India. It was

instituted in order to prevent further mixing of the Aryan race with other races found in India. The white varṇa of the brāhmaṇas indicated they were pure Aryan. According to Besant, as brāhmaṇas moved south they became darker in color due to climate. The red varṇa of the kshatriyas was brought about by intermarriage of Aryans and Toltecs, and these were located primarily in northern India. Intermarriage between Aryans and Mongols produced the yellow varṇa or vaiśyas. The native Dravidians were dark in color and became the black varṇa or sūdras.⁷³

Besant cited the Mahābhārata and the story of Satyakāma in the Chandogya Upaniṣad as proof that one's qualities and conduct and not birth should determine caste. By 1905 Besant had concluded that the caste system was not defensible as it was no longer working as it had originally been intended and that it was an obstacle to brotherhood. People were not performing the duties of their caste, and were nevertheless claiming the privileges of their caste. Brāhmaṇas in particular were no longer the teachers of India but were involved in various other professions. She called on brāhmaṇas to sacrifice their privileges and devote themselves to work for India's freedom.⁷⁴

Besant deplored the number of sub-castes that had grown out of the four varṇas. She felt that each varṇa should try to maintain its racial purity, but she encouraged interdining and intermarriage with sub-caste members of the same varṇa as promoting greater brotherhood. She also urged that foreign travel be allowed without loss of caste as a means of increasing brotherhood with the outside world.⁷⁵

Before India could teach the world the religious basis of brotherhood, Indians must extend the hand of

brotherhood to those who were beyond caste whom Besant variously referred to as outcastes, untouchables, pariahs, or the depressed or submerged classes. India could not be a free country until she lifted these people out of bondage. These people must be taught habits of cleanliness, educated, and taught trades. They should be treated with respect. Every Indian should personally work in this regard or help by giving money. The Theosophical Society operated several Pañchama Schools to assist in this work⁷⁶ that were originally founded by Colonel Olcott.

In 1913 Besant organized a band of her immediate Theosophical workers into "The Brothers of Service" who were pledged to disregard all restrictions based on caste, to delay the marriage of their sons and daughters, to educate the women of their families, and to discountenance the seclusion of women, to promote education of the masses, to ignore color distinctions in social and political life, and to promote entry of colored races into all countries on an equal basis as white immigrants, and to oppose social ostracism of widows who remarry.⁷⁷ The final pledge indicated how closely Annie Besant identified religious, social, and educational reform with political advance: "To promote union among the workers in the fields of spiritual, educational, social and political progress, under the headship and direction of the Indian National Congress."⁷⁸ Besant saw her work with The Brothers of Service as leading directly to her political work and the framing of the Commonwealth of India Bill.⁷⁹

Politics

Problems Caused by British Rule

Although Annie Besant saw the imperial connection between India and Great Britain as being an important step in the Divine Plan, she also felt that the time had come for Indians to govern their own country while maintaining their link with Great Britain as an equal partner in the Commonwealth. In arguing for this next step in the Divine Plan, Besant did not hesitate to point out the extremely detrimental effects of British rule on India.

Firstly, Besant saw British rule as impoverishing India due to the drain of Indian money to Great Britain as well as the high cost of British government. Tax revenues raised in India were not spent to benefit the country, but were sent to Great Britain or spent on facilities in India to support British rule, such as railways and the army. British government was expensive and increased the drain due to high salaries paid to British officials who did not spend their money in India, while Indians were relegated to unimportant and poorly paid jobs.⁸⁰

Conversely, Besant described the British government as being neglectful of spending money on things that would directly benefit Indians such as education, irrigation, and sanitation. Besant's views on education have already been examined. She felt very strongly that the British were neglectful in not providing facilities for irrigation. She described previous native Indian rulers as doing so and stated that if Indians ruled their own country the matter would be handled properly.⁸¹

Besant described British taxation as being a heavy burden on the country. Statistics varied in different areas and even in individual cases, but Besant cited statistics showing taxes to consist of anywhere from thirty per cent to ninety-six per cent of the gross value of a farmer's produce. She painted a picture of Great Britain squeezing the utmost revenue from impoverished Indians who felt lucky if they had one meal every two days. She described the taxation of past native Indian rulers as being considerably less, and their tax was levied on actual produce and not land area. Hence, under Indian rule land was allowed to lie fallow without being taxed. Under British rule, land was continuously cultivated contributing to the exhaustion of the soil and resulting in less produce for the support of the people.⁸²

Related to changed methods of taxation, Besant described British government as accomplishing what she called "the destruction of the village system." The destruction of the village system was in part the result of the new methods of taxation where a fixed amount of money was demanded instead of a fixed proportion of the crop. Other causes were substituting peasant proprietors of land for village ownership of land; substituting government officials for officials elected by the villagers from among themselves; and replacing foreign factory-made goods for the products of village industries. Besant called the institution of the ryotwari system in South India in 1916 "the death-blow" to the Indian village system. The ryotwari system apportioned plots of land to individual peasants who were required to pay rent. If the landholder was unable to pay the rent the land was transferred to another person. Besant spoke of the genius of Indians

for self-government as being manifested most strongly in the pañchāyat or village council, which conducted village business as well as functioned as a tribunal for judging local disputes. In pointing to the efficiency of village pañchāyats, Besant was demonstrating that knowledge of democratic principles and public-mindedness were not absent in India, and she felt that the pañchāyat should be the basic unit in the government of India.⁸³

An important element in the destruction of the village system as described by Besant was the destruction of village industries. In the old village system, craftsmen such as the carpenter, blacksmith, potter, and weaver were given land on which to live. In return for their services, the villagers cultivated plots of land for their benefit. After the British government took control of these lands, these artisans were forced to turn to farming, often finding themselves cultivating the poorest plots of land. Thus the villagers were left with no one to provide these services and a further burden was placed on the land. The weaving industry was further damaged when the government placed a tax on Indian-produced cloth to give the advantage to Lancashire imports. Besant wrote that Great Britain viewed India as a "plantation" from which raw materials such as iron, cotton, wood, coal were taken to supply Britain's industries instead of being used to supply native industries.⁸⁴

Besant saw all of these factors listed above: the drain of Indian money; neglect of irrigation; heavy taxation; the destruction of the village system; and the destruction of native industries, as contributing to a condition of "recurrent famine" that was common under British rule. She attributed India's poverty

directly to rule by Great Britain, and painted a picture of India's continuous prosperity up until the time the British came to India. She was fond of quoting Phillimore's statement about mid-eighteenth century India, "the droppings of its soil fed distant regions." Besant referred to the testimony of past travellers to India to prove that Indians enjoyed a high level of prosperity and well-being prior to the nineteenth century.⁸⁵

In addition to the extreme impoverishment of India, Besant saw British rule as the cause of the "stunting" of Indian character. The character of each individual was weakened and degraded by living under foreign rule. She often quoted Gokhale concerning the "atmosphere of inferiority" in which Indians were forced to live, where the most talented boy or young man knew that he would always be relegated to mediocre positions in his country.⁸⁶

So while Besant saw the British connection with India as having been destined for the ultimate good of both countries, she did not hesitate to point out the detrimental effects of British rule, which she saw as consisting of the drain of Indian wealth and the impoverishment of the country resulting in recurrent famines. She pointed to the destruction of traditional systems of government and taxation as well as native industries as contributing to the impoverishment of India. Finally, she saw British rule as stunting the Indian character. In pointing to positive reasons why India should have Home Rule, Besant emphasized the unity of India as a nation with a particular mission to fulfill for the benefit of the world.

India Is a Unified Nation

In her propaganda for Indian Home Rule, Besant argued that India was a unified nation fit to govern herself. As stated at the beginning of this chapter, Besant believed that a nation was the embodiment of a fragment of the Divine Life. A nation was "a Jīvātma, a living Self, with innate qualities which gradually appear and form its Character."⁸⁷

A Nation is distinctly an Individual with a Character, and that character depends on the nature of the Spirit at its core, and its gradual unfolding to play its part in humanity as a whole.⁸⁸

There were a number of components that went into the making of the outward form of a nation. These were "a geographical area, or territory; a common language; a Government; organisation; a common religion; a common ethnic type. . . ."⁸⁹ All these were important in forming a physical form for the national jīvātma but Besant explained that a nation could still exist if several of these components were missing. The Hebrew nation had survived throughout history while lacking a territory. The Hebrews were also an example of nationality being preserved while a common government was lacking. Besant felt that a common language was necessary in the early stages of a nation but was not essential. The Bretons and the Basques were part of the French nation although they had their own languages. The Swiss constituted a nation although there was no common Swiss tongue, French, German, and Italian being spoken. A common religion was particularly important in the early days of the nation. There might be racial mixing within a single nation but

it was better for the nation to preserve its ethnic unity. In the case of nations such as England and the United States, racial intermarriage had produced a new national type. Besant left organization undescribed.⁹⁰

A nation might continue to exist if a couple of these elements were lacking, but if too many were missing the outward form of the nation would die and the national jīvātma would seek reincarnation elsewhere. Besant often said that of all the ancient civilizations, India was the only one that had survived. Other ancient nations such as Egypt, Assyria, and Greece had died. The national jīvātma did not dwell in "the hybrid modern peoples who bear some of the ancient names."⁹¹

In an early pamphlet on India, written before she became a Theosophist, Besant wrote that India was not a single nation or even a single country due to varieties in geography, climate, race, and language.⁹² Later, as a Theosophist and an Indian patriot, she felt that not only did the Indian jīvātma continue to dwell in the Indian national form, but that the form itself continued to preserve its integrity although it had been subjected to many divisive forces. Racially, there had been much intermixture resulting in a type in which Aryan traits predominated. The Aryans came to India and intermarried with the people they found there. There were many invasions of peoples such as the Assyrians, Egyptians, Persians, and Greeks. Although these did not settle in India, they left traces of their racial heritage, thought, and art to enrich the culture of the Indian nation. The Islamic invaders settled in India and became assimilated into the Indian nation and enriched its life. Besant felt that a common language, Sanskrit, contributed to the unity of

the Indian national form, although it had given rise to many dialects, which had become languages in their own right. While India had never been a single political unit, Besant stressed that Hinduism provided the main source of unity to the Indian national form. The religion brought by the Aryan invaders combined with the religion of the earlier inhabitants of India producing a religion in which the same mantras were chanted from the Himālayas to Cape Comorin.⁹³ Hinduism gave rise to a religious and cultural unity and a unified national entity which Hindus variously called Aryāvarta, Jambudvīpa, and Bhāratavarṣa.

The prayers and hymns of Hindū rituals name her sacred rivers, her sacred cities, from Harḍvāra and Baḍarīkeḍārnāṭh in the North to Kāñchi and Rāmeshvaram in the South, from Ḍvāraka in the West to Jagannāth in the East.⁹⁴

This sense of India as a unified nation in the minds of individual Indians was enhanced by pilgrimages that devout Hindus took, and still take, to visit sacred places all over India.⁹⁵

Besant saw the incursion of Islamic invaders as causing "a rift in the religious and cultural Unity of India, but Islam has added much to her Art and Science, and we will hope for a future synthesis of hitherto seemingly incompatible elements."⁹⁶

While recognizing that there were many more religions in India besides Hinduism and Islam, and saying that the unity of so many religions in one nation would be India's triumph, Besant still felt that Hinduism was to play a special role in India's national life in the future. India's many religions would unite in brotherhood because they would recognize that they

had at their core the same basic doctrines, the Divine Wisdom or Theosophy.⁹⁷ Besant felt that it was significant that Hinduism, the world religion that was closest to the Divine Wisdom or Theosophy, possessed a tolerance for other religions that was necessary to build religious unity in India.

The civilisation and culture of India must be mainly based on Hinduism in the future as in the past. . . . Hinduism is peculiarly fitted to shape and colour the National future, for it is nonaggressive as regards other religions: it makes no converts, it assails no beliefs, it is as tolerant and patient as the earth. 'Mankind comes to me along many roads. By whatever road a man comes to me, on that road do I welcome him, for all roads are mine.' So spoke Shri Krishna.⁹⁸

Besant felt that India as a nation was ready to become a state. In other words, India was ready for the unified government that it had heretofore lacked. The new government of the new state of India should be continuous with India's past heritage and genius for government. India's new constitution should be framed by Indians and should use units of government native to India, in particular the village pañchāyat. Besant was instrumental in calling together a National Convention to frame a constitution for India consisting primarily of elected members and ex-members of the Central and Provincial Legislatures. The resulting Commonwealth of India Bill, which Besant had presented before Parliament in the hope of gaining Commonwealth status for India, provided for a graduated franchise and a series of organizational units of government extending

from the village pañchāyat to Provincial Councils and the Central Government. In the Commonwealth of India Bill, eligibility to run for office was determined by age, education, and experience in serving at least one term in the governing body immediately below the one aspired to. The right to elect members to each unit of government was governed by a rising scale of qualifications concerning matters such as age, education, and property ownership. All of these qualifications were minimal and were not designed to impose hardship but merely to require that the person voting have a minimal amount of experience and judgment.⁹⁹

Besant's scheme of government in the Commonwealth of India Bill can be found in an article published as early as 1908. She called this "aristocratic Socialism" and felt that it was "the next step upwards in civilisation." The graduated suffrage and the promoting of persons of ability from lower to higher units of government insured that "each man should have power according to the knowledge and capacity." Only wise and experienced persons should have the power to rule and likewise they had the greatest duty to serve.¹⁰⁰

Besant believed that as humanity had evolved it had passed through several stages of government. In humanity's childhood, the "Elders" or the Masters governed directly. These were the "Divine Kings" of India, China, Egypt, and Peru. The king was the hardest-worked man in the kingdom and he had responsibility for the welfare of all his subjects. The ownership of the land was either vested in the king or, as in India, in the village and administered by the pañchāyat. As it was necessary for humanity to grow out of this childish state guided by a benevolent

autocracy, the Divine Kings ceased to rule directly and kings of a less developed human type took their place. Tyranny resulted where kings ruled for their own selfish gain and not for the service of their subjects. Individualism grew and gradually the rights of individuals began to be emphasized over duty to the group. Democracy developed, but Besant did not see this as a solution since it gave the right to vote to every person regardless of his ability to make sound judgments concerning national government.¹⁰¹

In humanity's "Golden Age" or in other words in Besant's vision of the millennium, government would be socialistic in nature. This would be true democracy. It would be government by "mutual co-operation" and brought about by common agreement not by revolution and compulsion. It would be the government of the wise for the benefit for all, as embodied in Besant's Commonwealth of India Bill. Gradually, the regulations necessary to accomplish this socialistic state would no longer be needed since "the separated wills of men" would be in perfect accord with the "Will of God."¹⁰²

Besant felt that socialism in government was "a return, at a more complicated social stage, to the principle of the family. . . ."¹⁰³ In the family, members were not equal in terms of capacity, experience, and wisdom. The needs of the younger members were greater and the needs of the older members were less because of their greater capacity. The elder family members were glad to help the younger members because of their love for them. The socialistic state would follow Proudhon's axiom, "From every one according to his capacities; to every one according to his needs."¹⁰⁴

Besant's vision for India was based on a conception that each nation was a reincarnating entity that had its own karma and particular mission to play in the drama of evolution on earth. A nation remained intact as long as its outward form or "body" remained intact. If too many of the constituent elements of a nation's body were missing, the national "soul" would reincarnate elsewhere. Besant argued that India was a unified nation possessing most of the components necessary for its outward form. Despite the great variety of religions in India, Besant saw India's unity as being primarily based on Hinduism. Hinduism as the world religion closest to the Divine Wisdom or Theosophy possessed the tolerance necessary to build religious unity in India. Besant hoped to be instrumental in providing India with the government that it had heretofore lacked as a component in its national "body." Her Commonwealth of India Bill was an attempt to create in India Besant's vision of the socialistic state in which those who were able and capable ruled for the benefit of all. Besant felt that this socialism of love would be the redemption of mankind and would be the form of government of the Sixth Root Race.¹⁰⁵

Besant and Gandhi

Besant's political career in India was closely related to that of Mohandas Gandhi. Their relationship was one of opposition of goals as well as methods. As Gandhi increasingly became India's national hero, Indians became less inclined to listen to Besant due to her opposition to Gandhi's goal for India and method.

It has been described that Besant's goal for India was for India to become an equal partner with Great Britain in an Indo-British Commonwealth of Nations. Besant saw evolution as tending toward larger and larger aggregations of humanity and the Indo-British Commonwealth would be a major step toward actualizing the world-wide brotherhood of all nations.

As the struggle for Indian Home Rule went on, Gandhi began to state his own goal for India in terms of complete independence from Great Britain. Besant found it impossible to cooperate with the Indian National Congress during those times when under Gandhi's leadership its stated goal was complete independence and it adopted Gandhi's method of Non-Cooperation.¹⁰⁶ Besant felt that Gandhi and his followers were working for an "isolated India," which "will not come to the birth, for where evolution is carrying on Humanity towards Union, such a birth would be a monstrosity, fated to perish, because unable to breathe the pure air of BROTHERHOOD and SERVICE."¹⁰⁷

Gandhi called his method Satyagraha variously translated as "holding on to truth," or "soul-force." Satyagraha was not simply civil disobedience. Civil disobedience was only the final resort for Satyagraha. Satyagraha was a non-violent technique for resolving conflict, and it had three stages. In the first, one tried to persuade the opponent through reason. If this failed one moved to the next stage which was persuasion through suffering. By suffering one was dramatizing the issues and attempting to get the opponent to listen to rational argument. If this failed then one was justified in using non-cooperation or civil disobedience.¹⁰⁸

In the ultimate context, truth was the goal for Gandhi and ahimsa (non-violence) was the means. Since every person perceived truth differently, ahimsa must characterize the process of resolving conflict. Since truth could only be known relatively one must always be ready to negotiate with the opponent to try to come to an agreement that met the needs of all concerned. Non-violence meant interacting with other humans in a constructive and peaceful way. Self-suffering required courage on the part of the Satyagrahi and it was an indication of sincere willingness to sacrifice.¹⁰⁹

Suffering operates in the satyagraha strategy as a tactic for cutting through the rational defenses which the opponent may have built in opposing the initial efforts of rational persuasion through the clear statement and the argument of the satyagrahi position.¹¹⁰

Gandhi's "constructive program," which included such goals as removal of untouchability, the uplift of women, and education in health and hygiene, was the positive side of Satyagraha.¹¹¹

Besant most commonly referred to Gandhi's method as "Non-Co-Operation," referring to Gandhi's program of civil disobedience or non-cooperation with the British government. This was manifested in the boycotting of Provincial Councils by elected members, and hartals or general strikes. Gandhi also recommended that Indian students should withdraw from all schools showing sympathy with the English including the Benares Hindu University and all schools founded by Annie Besant. Gandhi's program also included the boycott of foreign-made cloth and the picketing of shops selling it. He also encouraged picketing of liquor shops.

Besant pointed out that Non-Co-Operation very often resulted in violence despite professions of ahimsa. She misunderstood Gandhi's statement that his Satyagrahis must "compel shooting" and draw government fire upon themselves. This was in accord with the method of Satyagraha. Suffering and self-sacrifice would compel the opponent to see the point of view being put forward. Besant thought that Gandhi was endorsing lawless behavior on the part of his followers with his statement that they must cause the government to use violence against them. However, Besant correctly pointed out that many of Gandhi's followers did not remain non-violent, but resorted to aggression in order to make unwilling shopkeepers observe hartals, and in harassing patrons of cloth and liquor shops.¹¹² Besant pointed out that initially Gandhi had considered boycott to be a form of violence.¹¹³ Not only did boycott become a major part of the program of Non-Co-Operation, but according to Besant Non-Co-Operation inevitably descended into "social ostracism, denial of freedom in speech or action to all who do not agree with the violent minority, and ultimately a far more intolerable condition than the present; it will pass into looting, rioting, and murder."¹¹⁴

The very word, "Non-Co-Operation," was abhorrent to Annie Besant, for she saw it as the very antithesis of her millenarian dream. Only cooperation would bring about a condition of true brotherhood in the world which would be characterized by everyone working for everyone else in love and service. Non-cooperation could have no other result than violence, hatred, and division.

We begin to realise that Co-operation between the people and the Government is the very

basis of Society, and that without it, Society ceases to exist, and is reduced to a mob of individuals; law disappears, order vanishes, the strongest rules, anarchy prevails. Out of barbarism man has risen by Co-operation; into barbarism he returns if he adopts Non-Co-operation. We realise that this innocent seeming phrase, 'Non-Co-operation with Government,' is really a declaration of war against Society; it is no moral nor spiritual force, but an appeal to physical force which strikes at the very basis of Society and of civilised life.¹¹⁵

In her more positive view of Gandhi and his method, Besant acknowledged the value of his method, but felt strongly that humanity was not sufficiently evolved to practice the method with a perfect sense of self-sacrifice and ahimsa.¹¹⁶ She felt that Gandhi had a glimpse of human nature as it would be evolved in the Seventh Root Race where no laws would be needed because each individual would be in direct touch with the divinity within himself and all others, and would naturally have the individual will attuned to the Divine Will.¹¹⁷

Besant did not casually express her most extreme negative view of Gandhi to the public. She did so only after a prestigious member of the Theosophical Society, Upendranath Basu, retired General Secretary of the Indian Section, addressed a letter to members of the Theosophical Society in which he quoted an earlier statement of Besant praising Gandhi for his spirit of self-sacrifice in the service of humanity. Basu used Besant's own words to uphold his contention that Gandhi's Satyagraha

. . . has undoubtedly for its sole aim and end nothing more nor less than the inauguration on earth of the Kingdom of God by the extinction from the mind of man of all hate and violence, and the establishment, on a higher plane, of true peace and harmony among all mankind, and thus the uplift of humanity as a whole.¹¹⁸

Besant could not let her own name and previous statements be used to uphold a contention like this. Basu was saying that Gandhi's method, which was abhorrent to her, would bring about a millennial condition. In response, Besant was forced to spell out exactly how she saw Gandhi. While granting that her words in praise of Gandhi had been applicable at the time they were made, she explained that, tragically, Gandhi had fallen under the control of the forces who seek to retard evolution which Theosophists call "the Lords of the Dark Face." Gandhi in his lofty vision of self-sacrifice and ahimsa had attracted the attention of these evil forces and had succumbed to their influence. Under their impulsion he was trying to implement this vision of humanity into actual practice too soon, and thus the only result could be lawlessness, violence, and hatred. As an example of Gandhi's downfall, she cited Gandhi's own statements that he had disregarded warnings from God concerning the unreadiness of people to practice Satyagraha. He admitted succumbing to pressure to implement civil disobedience despite the unreadiness of the people and he finally made a statement "which astonished even myself who regard him as the tool of the Great Enemy--that non-violence was only a policy, and a policy might be changed."¹¹⁹

I say now that the above is the key of my policy since I parted company with Mr. Gandhi, a policy of unswerving antagonism, persistent and unbroken. I have claimed no authority in this, save my own conscience. But as my alleged seership is used against all that to me is most sacred, I speak what I believe to be true, that both Mr. Gandhi's work and mine are channels of higher forces. History will give the final verdict. Meanwhile, let men see our fruits, and judge as they will.¹²⁰

Opposed to Gandhi's method, Besant offered her own method of constitutional reform to gain Home Rule for India. She saw the choice between her own line of work and that of Gandhi as a choice between parliamentary agitation and revolution.

But it is important that everyone should understand that Non-Co-Operation is a revolutionary method, as much as taking up arms. Attempts to transform Government by reforms are constitutional; to destroy a Government whether by machine-gun or paralysis is revolutionary, and to assert an empty right to kill by guns or paralysis, when you can do neither, is childish.¹²¹

While recognizing the right of any country to revolt whenever the government was intolerable, Besant denied that India's case had become so extreme. Instead she preferred to follow the constitutional methods of her old tutor in politics, Charles Bradlaugh.¹²² She felt that India's current situation was not conducive to the success of a revolution. Moreover, constitutional reform was the only way the

link between India and Great Britain could be preserved that Besant felt was so vital to the future of the world.

Annie Besant made a number of attempts to find points of unity with Gandhi on which basis they could join forces to obtain Home Rule for India. Due to her strong belief in the unity and brotherhood of humanity, a situation of political disunity in the effort to obtain Home Rule for India was intolerable to her. When Gandhi agreed to suspend civil disobedience as part of the Congress program, Besant felt that she could gladly rejoin Congress and support Gandhi's work in promoting unity between Indian communities and removal of untouchability. Although she had supported the use of Indian-made products since 1913, Besant had reservations about spinning being a requirement of Congress membership. She listened to Gandhi's arguments in favor of spinning and decided that for the sake of political unity she could spin. Additionally, Besant attempted to promote political unity in India by working with the All-Parties Conference.¹²³

Essentially, however, Besant's political career in India was eclipsed by that of Gandhi. The increasing number of articles in New India in the years 1925-27 on the World-Teacher indicate that Besant's attention was focusing more and more on that line of work to achieve her millennial goal.¹²⁴

Notes

¹Besant's written statements concerning India after becoming a Theosophist show little chronological progression of thought. Most of her statements indicate a fixed and fully developed point of view. It is possible to observe that from 1893, the date of Besant's first visit to India, until 1913, most of Besant's lectures on India deal with religious or educational topics. Besant saw her work at this time as relating to the uplift of Indian, specifically Hindu, pride in India's cultural and religious heritage. When Besant first came to India she promised British officials that she would not participate in Indian politics, and she kept this promise until 1913 when she reported that the members of the Occult Hierarchy had ordered her to work for social reform in India as well as for Indian Home Rule. By this time Besant had been lecturing on the coming of the World-Teacher for five years, so Besant's thought on how India would fit in to her millennial scheme appeared full-blown with no evidence of chronological development. The few instances where there is evidence of development in Besant's thought in relation to India, as for example in her thought concerning caste, are specifically mentioned in the text of this chapter.

²Annie Besant, Shall India Live or Die? (N.p.: The National Home Rule League, 1925), pp. 22-25.

³Ibid., p. 27; Annie Besant, India: Bond or Free? (London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, Ltd., 1926), p. 5.

⁴The Great Vision: Annie Besant's Plan for the New World, The Besant Spirit Series, no. 11 (Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1944), p. 49.

⁵Ibid., p. 50.

⁶Ibid., p. 52; Annie Besant, "India's Awakening," in The Birth of New India (Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1917), p. 27.

⁷Besant, Shall India Live or Die?, p. 23.

⁸Annie Besant, The Future of Indian Politics (Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1922), p. 310.

⁹Ibid., p. 298.

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 47-48.

¹¹Ibid., pp. 298, 310.

¹²The High Purpose of War, The Besant Spirit Series, no. 6 (Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1940), p. 82.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Besant, India: Bond or Free?, pp. 191, 196-98; "Christ to Return Says Mrs. Besant," New India (Madras), 1 November 1926, p. 4.

¹⁵"Era of Agitation," New India (Madras), 27 April 1925, p. 4; Annie Besant, "Party or Country?" New India (Madras), 12 March 1925, p. 6.

¹⁶Annie Besant, "India and the World," The Star 2 (March 1929): 14.

¹⁷Besant, "India's Awakening," pp. 5-7.

¹⁸Annie Besant, "From Peace to Power," The Theosophist 51 (November 1929): 150; Annie Besant, "Britain and India," The Theosophist 43 (January 1922): 325-27; Besant, The Future of Indian Politics, pp. 36-39; The Besant Spirit: Ideals in Education, The Besant Spirit Series, vol. 2 (Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1939), pp. 17-24.

¹⁹Besant, "From Peace to Power," p. 151.

²⁰Annie Besant, "India, Her Past and Her Future," in The Birth of New India (Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1917), p. 38; Annie Besant, Ancient Ideals in Modern Life: Being the four Convention Lectures delivered at the Twenty-fifth Anniversary of the Theosophical Society at Benares, December, 1900, 2d ed. (Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1925), p. 3; "Dr. Annie Besant's Jubilee," New India (Madras), 4 September 1924, p. 9; Annie Besant, Duties of the Theosophist (Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1917), p. 51.

²¹Besant, Duties of the Theosophist, p. 45.

²²Annie Besant, The Religious Problem in India: Four Lectures delivered during the Twenty-sixth annual Convention of the Theosophical Society at Adyar,

Madras, 1901, 2d ed. (Adyar, Madras: The "Theosophist" Office, 1909), pp. 1-2.

²³Ibid., pp. 116-17.

²⁴Annie Besant, "Hinduism and Nationality," New India (Madras), 9 January 1915, p. 7; Besant, Ancient Ideals in Modern Life, p. 36.

²⁵Besant, "Hinduism and Nationality," p. 7.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Annie Besant, Seven Great Religions, Slightly Abridged, 5th ed. (1970; reprint, Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1972), p. 5.

²⁸Besant, Duties of the Theosophist, pp. 45-46.

²⁹Annie Besant, "The Value of the Upanishads to Young India," New India (Madras), 28 August 1915, p. 5.

³⁰Besant, Ancient Ideals in Modern Life, p. 10.

³¹Annie Besant, The Wisdom of the Upanishads: Four Convention Lectures delivered at the Thirty-first Anniversary of The Theosophical Society at Adyar, December, 1906, 1st ed. (Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1907), pp. 22-23, 35-36; Annie Besant, Evolution of Life and Form: Four Lectures delivered at the Twenty-third Anniversary Meeting of the Theosophical Society at Adyar, Madras, 1898, 3rd ed. (London: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1909), p. 24.

³²Besant, Evolution of Life and Form, pp. 24-29.

³³Annie Besant, An Introduction to Yoga, 1st ed. (Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1908), p. 23.

³⁴Besant, The Wisdom of the Upanishads, pp. 53-54.

³⁵Annie Besant, In Defense of Hinduism (Benares: Theosophical Publishing Society, n.d.), p. 65.

³⁶Ibid., p. 67.

³⁷Besant, The Wisdom of the Upanishads, p. 82.

³⁸Besant, Duties of the Theosophist, p. 14.

³⁹Besant, An Introduction to Yoga, pp. 12-13, 17-18, 53-54; Besant, Seven Great Religions, p. 35.

⁴⁰Besant, Seven Great Religions, pp. 35-36.

⁴¹Ibid., pp. 36-37.

⁴²Ibid., p. 37.

⁴³Ibid., pp. 37-38.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 38; Annie Besant, Brahmavidya, The Brahmavidya Library, no. 1 (Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1923), pp. 9-10.

⁴⁵Besant, Seven Great Religions, pp. 38-39.

⁴⁶Besant, An Introduction to Yoga, p. 42.

⁴⁷Ibid., pp. 42-73.

⁴⁸Ibid., pp. 42-43.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 43.

⁵⁰Besant, Brahmavidya, pp. 92-93.

⁵¹Annie Besant, ed., The Universal Text Book of Religion and Morals, Part I, 3d ed. (Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1962), p. 116.

⁵²Ibid., pp. 116, 121-22; Annie Besant, The Laws of the Higher Life: Being Lectures delivered at an Annual Convention of the Indian Section of the Theosophical Society, held at Varanasi (Benares) (Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1903), pp. 34-46, 53-55; Besant, Ancient Ideals in Modern Life, pp. 72-73.

⁵³Ideals in Education, pp. 28, 86-87, 107-10; Besant, India: Bond or Free?, p. 129.

⁵⁴Besant, India: Bond or Free?, p. 129.

⁵⁵Ideals in Education, pp. 33-34; Besant, Shall India Live or Die?, pp. 42, 45-46; Annie Besant, India: A Nation, rev. ed. (London: Home Rule for India League, 1917), pp. 76-77.

⁵⁶Besant, India: Bond or Free?, p. 115.

⁵⁷Besant, Shall India Live or Die?, pp. 55-58; Besant, India: Bond or Free?, pp. 121-22; Besant, India: A Nation, p. 93.

⁵⁸Besant, India: Bond or Free?, p. 123; Besant, Shall India Live or Die?, p. 56.

⁵⁹Besant, India: Bond or Free?, p. 126; Besant, India: A Nation, p. 92; Besant, Duties of the Theosophist, pp. 50-56; Besant, "India's Awakening," pp. 8-10; Annie Besant, "Education as a National Duty," in The Birth of New India (Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1917), pp. 89-90; Annie Besant, "National Education," in The Birth of New India (Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1917), pp. 188-90.

⁶⁰Besant, "India's Awakening," pp. 18-19; Besant, Duties of the Theosophist, pp. 60-61; Besant, India: Bond or Free?, pp. 128-29; Annie Besant, "The Indian Nation," in The Birth of New India (Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1917), p. 31; Annie Besant, "The Education of Indian Girls," in The Birth of New India (Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1917), p. 152.

⁶¹Besant, Duties of the Theosophist, p. 57; Ideals in Education, pp. 87-88, 109; Annie Besant, "The Necessity for Religious Education," in The Birth of New India (Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1917), pp. 118, 124-28.

⁶²Besant, "The Indian Nation," p. 36.

⁶³Besant, "Education as a National Duty," pp. 102-4; [Annie Besant], Sanātana-Dharma: An Advanced Textbook of Hindu Religion and Ethics, 1st Adyar ed. (Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1940).

⁶⁴Besant, The Universal Text Book of Religion and Morals, Part I, p. 8.

⁶⁵Annie Besant, "Social Reform," New India (Madras), 1 December 1923, p. 11.

⁶⁶Ibid.

⁶⁷Ibid.

⁶⁸Besant, Ancient Ideals in Modern Life, p. 12.

⁶⁹Ibid., pp. 14-15.

⁷⁰Ibid., pp. 24-27; Besant, Duties of the Theosophist, pp. 38-41; Annie Besant, Wake Up, India: A Plea for Social Reform (Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1913), pp. 48-50, 57-74.

⁷¹Besant, Ancient Ideals in Modern Life, pp. 41-62.

⁷²Besant, Wake Up, India, pp. 266-67, 270-72, 274-75; Besant, Ancient Ideals in Modern Life, pp. 70-73.

⁷³Besant, Wake Up, India, pp. 278-80.

⁷⁴Ibid., pp. 267-68, 272-73, 275-77, 282-94; Besant, Ancient Ideals in Modern Life, p. 69; Annie Besant, "United India," New India (Madras), 14 August 1915, p. 11.

⁷⁵Besant, Ancient Ideals in Modern Life, pp. 78-81, 86-90, 132; Besant, "United India," p. 11.

⁷⁶Besant, Wake Up, India, pp. 85, 90-106; Besant, Duties of the Theosophist, pp. 32-37; Besant, India: Bond or Free?, p. 30; Besant, "United India," p. 11; Annie Besant, "Mrs. Annie Besant. Her Address at Allahabad," New India (Madras), 13 December 1915, p. 18.

⁷⁷Besant, The Future of Indian Politics, pp. 38-39; Besant, Wake Up, India, pp. 299-300; Besant, India: Bond or Free?, p. 204.

⁷⁸Besant, India: Bond or Free?, p. 204.

⁷⁹Ibid., pp. 203-16.

⁸⁰Besant, India: A Nation, pp. 43-52, 62-66.

⁸¹Ibid., pp. 44-45, 71-73; "Dr. Besant's Message," New India (Madras), 28 April 1924, p. 7; Besant, India: Bond or Free?, pp. 65-66.

⁸²Besant, India: A Nation, pp. 52-62.

⁸³Besant, India: Bond or Free?, pp. 13-15, 19, 48-49, 54-56, 58-59; Besant, The Future of Indian Politics, p. 280-88; Besant, Shall India Live or Die?, pp. 60, 65; Besant, Brahmavidya, p. 104; Annie Besant, Lectures on Political Science, 2d ed. (Adyar, Madras: The Commonweal Office, 1920), pp. 94-95, 97.

⁸⁴Besant, India: Bond or Free?, pp. 70-71, 137-41; Besant, India: A Nation, pp. 44, 66-71; Besant, Shall India Live or Die?, pp. 97-99.

⁸⁵Besant, Shall India Live or Die?, pp. 6, 88; Besant, India: Bond or Free?, pp. 66, 72-73; Besant, The Future of Indian Politics, pp. 14-15; "Dr. Besant's Message," p. 7.

⁸⁶Besant, Shall India Live or Die?, p. 29; Besant, India: Bond or Free?, pp. 3-4; Besant, India: A Nation, pp. 11-12.

⁸⁷Besant, Lectures on Political Science, pp. 67-68.

⁸⁸*Ibid.*, p. 68.

⁸⁹*Ibid.*, p. 66.

⁹⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 65-67.

⁹¹*Ibid.*, pp. 67-68; Besant, India: Bond or Free?, p. 10; Annie Besant, "India's Mission Among Nations," in The Birth of New India (Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1917) p. 85; Besant, India: A Nation, pp. 3-4.

⁹²Annie Besant, England, India, Afghanistan, and the Story of Afghanistan or Why the Tory Government Gags the Indian Press, 1st Indian ed. (Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1931), p. 5.

⁹³Besant, Lectures on Political Science, pp. 65-66, 68.

⁹⁴Besant, The Future of Indian Politics, p. 7.

⁹⁵Annie Besant, A Bird's Eye View of India's Past as the Foundation for India's Future, 4th ed., rev. and enl. (Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1930), p. 6.

⁹⁶Besant, The Future of Indian Politics, p. 8.

⁹⁷Annie Besant, The Religious Problem in India, pp. 1-2, 104, 108.

⁹⁸Annie Besant, "Hinduism and Nationality," New India (Madras), 9 January 1915, p. 7.

⁹⁹Besant, Lectures on Political Science, p. 52; Annie Besant, "The National Convention: Dominion Home Rule for India," New India (Madras), 5 June 1924, p. 3; Annie Besant, "The National Convention: Dominion Status for India," New India (Madras), 9 August 1924, p. 3; Indian Problems, The Besant Spirit, vol. 3 (Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1939), pp. 137-55.

¹⁰⁰Annie Besant, "The Future Socialism," New India (Madras), 28 October 1921, pp. 2-3.

¹⁰¹Ibid.

¹⁰²Besant, Lectures on Political Science, pp. 132-33; Besant, "The Future Socialism," pp. 2-3.

¹⁰³Besant, Lectures on Political Science, p. 133.

¹⁰⁴Ibid., pp. 42, 133.

¹⁰⁵Besant, Brahmavidya, pp. 111, 113.

¹⁰⁶Arthur H. Nethercot, The Last Four Lives of Annie Besant (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1963), pp. 303, 330, 414-16.

¹⁰⁷Annie Besant, "The Unification of the Scout Movement in India," New India (Madras), 14 March 1921, p. 6.

¹⁰⁸Joan Bondurant, Conquest of Violence: The Gandhian Philosophy of Conflict, rev. ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965), p. 11.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., pp. 23-24, 193.

¹¹⁰Ibid., p. 228.

¹¹¹Ibid., pp. 180-81.

¹¹²Annie Besant, "Steps to Revolution," New India (Madras), 26 January 1922, pp. 6-7; Annie Besant, "The Political Situation," New India (Madras), 20 January 1922, p. 3.

¹¹³Besant, "The Political Situation," p. 3.

¹¹⁴Annie Besant, "Non-Co-Operation Questions," New India (Madras), 23 December 1920, p. 3.

¹¹⁵Annie Besant, "Non-Co-Operation," in Gandhian Non-Co-Operation or Shall India Commit Suicide?, ed. Annie Besant (Madras: "New India" Office, 1920), p. 29.

¹¹⁶Besant, "Non-Co-Operation Questions," p. 3.

¹¹⁷Besant, Brahmavidya, p. 113; Annie Besant, "Dr. Besant and Mr. Gandhi," New India (Madras), 21 March 1922, p. 3.

¹¹⁸Besant, "Dr. Besant and Mr. Gandhi," p. 3.

¹¹⁹Ibid.

¹²⁰Ibid.

¹²¹Annie Besant, "Non-Co-Operation," p. 25.

¹²²Annie Besant, "Is There A Way Out?" in Gandhian Non-Co-Operation or Shall India Commit Suicide?, ed. Annie Besant (Madras: "New India" Office, 1920), pp. 21-22; Annie Besant, "Party or Country?" New India (Madras), 12 March 1925, p. 6; Annie Besant, "What Is Our Duty to the Nation?" New India (Madras), 4 November 1924, p. 6.

¹²³Annie Besant, "For Unity All Round," New India (Madras), 15 September 1924, p. 7; Annie Besant, "Impressions of the Leaders' Conference," New India (Madras), 24 November 1924, p. 6; Annie Besant, "Party or Country?" p. 6.

¹²⁴"The Coming of the World-Teacher," New India (Madras), 17 December 1925, pp. 3-4; "New Race in America," New India (Madras), 11 June 1926, p. 9; "Dr. Besant on the Coming of the World Teacher," New India (Madras), 19 July 1926, p. 4; "Krishnamurti and the Wondrous Voice," New India (Madras), 19 July 1926, p. 4; "A New 'Star' from the East," New India (Madras), 19 July 1926, p. 4; "Mrs. Annie Besant Denies She Has

Proclaimed 'The Messiah'," New India (Madras), 21 July 1926, p. 4; "The World Teacher," New India (Madras), 16 August 1926, p. 4; "The Coming of the World Teacher," New India (Madras), 18 August 1926, p. 4; "Krishnamurti Here; Says His Message is World Happiness," New India (Madras) 29 September 1926, pp. 4-5; Forrest Davis, "Mr. Krishnamurti in America," New India (Madras), 1 October 1926, p. 4; "Krishnamurti Says We Don't Know Art," New India (Madras), 13 October 1926, p. 4; Margery Rex, "World-Teacher Plays Tennis and Golf," New India (Madras), 14 October 1926, p. 4; "Krishnaji Deplores America's Overemphasis of the Material Side," New India (Madras), 14 October 1926, p. 4; "Reminiscences of Ommen," New India (Madras), 14 October 1926, p. 4; "Christ to Return," New India (Madras), 1 November 1926, p. 4; C. R. Maybin, "Preparing Way for the Leader of New Gospel," New India (Madras), 9 November 1926, p. 4; "Birth of a New Race Sighted in California By Dr. Besant," New India (Madras), 9 November 1926, p. 4; "Report on Krishnamurti," New India (Madras), 9 November 1926, p. 4; "Theosophist Tells of Coming Era," New India (Madras), 9 November 1926, p. 4; "Jiddu Krishnamurti," New India (Madras), 30 November 1926, p. 4; "New Race Appearing. Krishnamurti to be its Teacher, Says Dr. Besant," New India (Madras), 1 December 1926, p. 4; Ray Schultz, "Krishnamurti and the Prophecy of Count Leo Tolstoy," New India (Madras), 28 February 1927, p. 4; "Dr. Annie Besant Purchases Site for New Race Settlement in Upper Ojai," New India (Madras), 4 March 1927, p. 4; "The Coming of the World-Teacher," New India (Madras), 14 March 1927, pp. 3-4.

CHAPTER VII

The World-Teacher

Reasons for Expecting the Imminent Appearance of the World-Teacher

Besant first began lecturing on the coming of the World-Teacher in 1909. As a Theosophist, Besant believed in the Logos, devas, the Masters and other highly evolved individuals as superhuman agents who would bring about the millennial condition. For Besant the World-Teacher was an additional superhuman agent whose appearance in the world was imminent and necessary to accomplish the millennial state. Thus Besant's teachings concerning the World-Teacher marked the addition of messianism to her thought. Through the years, Besant consistently gave the same reasons for the imminent appearance of the World-Teacher. These were:

1. The development of a new racial type was being reported, particularly in southern California;
2. Signs indicated that a new land mass or "distribution of land" was developing in the Pacific;
3. In the history of the Aryan race a great teacher had appeared at the development of each new sub-race;
4. These teachers had always appeared when the previous civilization had reached a point of decay and deadlock, so that the old patterns of thought were no longer productive;
5. Every past civilization had been destroyed because it had not been based on the Law of Brotherhood;¹
6. People all over the world of various faiths

were expecting the coming of a great Teacher.²

Besant made reference to studies by the Smithsonian Institute, the Ethnological Bureau in Washington, D.C., and the work of the anthropologist, Dr. Hrdlika, who wrote The American Race, to prove her contention that a new sub-race was developing in California. She explained that the new sub-race was developing in the United States since this nation was a melting-pot of races and particularly in southern California since the atmosphere there was more highly charged with electricity, which was conducive to the development of psychic faculties. However, there were also signs of this same sub-race developing in Australia. Besant cited studies to show that the children of the new sub-race were more intelligent than other children, but she also cautioned that these children were not well-suited to book-learning since they operated more on the intuitive level rather than the mental level. These children had a very delicate nervous system and instinctively refrained from eating meat. According to Besant, a new sub-race was born at the zenith of the previous sub-race, so it was significant to her that what she called the Teutonic race was at the height of its world-power in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. She felt that the "sixth sub-race . . . would be born with the Sixth Root Race in it" and that the present sixth sub-race children would grow up to be parents of Sixth Root Race children.³

The sixth sub-race and subsequently the Sixth Root Race would possess the characteristics of buddhi. The unity or brotherhood of humanity would be a living reality to them so that cooperation, love, and compas-

sion for the weak would be the hallmarks of all their activities. They would be able to synthesize diverse opinions and patterns of thought to create a unified point of view. Members of the new race would live according to the Law of Sacrifice and they would understand the working of the Law of Karma. To the extent that a person lived in this manner he could become part of the new race regardless of his present race.⁴

And that utter belief in Law, and therefore the recognition of duty, that is another of the great marks of the race that is to be. Every one of you who works that out now in life, who, in the face of an apparent wrong, is calm and receptive, who takes an injustice as a debt that is paid and cancelled, that man or woman is a candidate for the coming sub-race, and for the Root Race that shall be gathered out of its midst. For the sixth Root Race is to be taken out of the sixth sub-race that is now being born, and according to the qualities you make in yourselves will be the effectiveness of your candidature for both.⁵

Besant wrote that the sixth sub-race children being born at that time were the reincarnation of the young men who sacrificed their lives in World War I and who, as a result of their great sacrifice, had become fit to be members of the new sub-race.⁶ She recommended meditation as an important means to develop one's consciousness and vehicles on all planes, and she cited the example of the Indian yogi who through meditation "builds up the brain of the coming race out of the brain of the race that is."⁷

The Secret Doctrine taught that each Root Race would have its own continent or configuration of land on which to develop. Therefore it was very significant to Besant that scientists were discussing the possibility of a new continent arising out of the "Earthquake Ring of the Pacific." The British Association for the Advancement of Science had discussed the possibility of a world-wide tidal wave being caused by the violent emergence of such a land mass. However, Besant felt that the new continent would emerge gradually and that it would cause no world-wide catastrophe although there would necessarily have to be localized destruction from time to time.⁸

The Pacific continent continues to evolve. We hear now that the floor of the ocean is rising in the Gulf of Alaska, and that it is not unlikely that the Behring Sea will gradually disappear, so that dry land will unite Asia and America. Volcanoes are very active in all this region. But many thousands of years, perhaps many hundreds of thousands, must elapse ere the new continent will become available for the sixth Root Race of our humanity.⁹

Looking at the past history of the Aryan race Besant felt that it was clear that a World-Teacher appeared on earth every time a sub-race was beginning its development. Earlier she had taught that religions were given out by the Masters. At this time Besant went further by saying that all religions were "delivered by a World Teacher. Each of them begins a new stage of civilisation with its own peculiar mark. . . ."¹⁰ According to Besant, the Lord Gautama became the Bodhisattva or World-Teacher during the

latter part of the Fourth Root Race. He later incarnated as Vyāsa and delivered the religion of Hinduism to the first sub-race of the Fifth Root Race. Then he appeared as Thoth or Hermes Trismegistos in Egypt for the benefit of the second sub-race. This revelation was recorded in the Egyptian Book of the Dead. He came as Zarathushtra to the third sub-race. He founded the Greek Mystery cults as Orpheus in his mission to the fourth sub-race. Finally, he incarnated in India as Prince Siddhartha. During this incarnation he reached Buddhahood and Lord Maitreya took up the office of Bodhisattva.¹¹

Lord Maitreya as the Bodhisattva first incarnated in India as Sri Kṛṣṇa thus changing Hinduism from "a religion of Knowledge" to "a religion of Devotion." Besant explained that the many similarities in the tales concerning Kṛṣṇa and Jesus Christ were due to the fact that both were incarnations of Maitreya, the Lord of Compassion. The purpose of the Christ incarnation was to present a doctrine that would become the basis of the fifth sub-race civilization. According to Besant, the two main teachings of Christianity were self-sacrifice and the value of the individual. It was necessary for individuality to be fully developed by the fifth sub-race before the sense of unity could be realized in the sixth sub-race civilization. Only a strong individual was capable of the self-sacrifice that was exemplified by Christ's death on the cross. Jesus Christ was the most recent incarnation of the World-Teacher, and Besant felt that the next incarnation was imminent.¹²

Besant felt that the World-Teacher appeared on earth in order to deliver the ideology of the new civilization just at the time when the ideology of the

old civilization had reached a point of deadlock. In other words "the old methods have carried us as far as we can go, that they are breaking in our hands, that we no longer can use them for opening up new vistas of thought and hope for man."¹³ Besant expounded on what she considered to be the present deadlocks in Religion, Science, Art, and Social Conditions, and which were pointing to the necessity of the arrival of the World-Teacher to resolve them.

In Religion, i.e., western religion, higher criticism had undermined authority which had been based on what were considered to be divinely inspired scriptures. A science called "comparative mythology" which developed out of archaeological research explained all religions as arising out of human ignorance. The idea of evolution and other scientific findings called into question the old theistic conception of God. At that time even Christian clergymen were raising questions concerning previous assumptions made about the nature of Christ. In the realm of morality, there was public discussion as to whether or not morality should be based on religious teachings and the general public opinion was that it should not. Besant felt that the moral question was a deadlock because in her own experience she had found that only unselfish and heroic persons would respond to the moral principle of utility, whereas the vast majority of people needed to be taught self-sacrifice based on knowledge of the relationship of the part to the larger whole. She felt that this was the message of "religion." Likewise the other deadlocks in religion could be resolved if the world turned to a belief in a God who was imminent and evolving in creation, and who could be known through direct experience.¹⁴

The deadlock in science was discussed earlier. Science's instruments of observation were inadequate to observe the subtler levels of matter. In addition, science was unable to solve "the riddles of psychology" discussed earlier.¹⁵ These problems would be solved when new faculties were developed which revealed the workings of the universe on the finer planes.

Art was found to be in a deadlock when the products of industrial civilization began to replace homemade articles of natural beauty. Industrial pollution and the living and working environments created by industrialization were killing out the human sense of beauty. The new faculties referred to above would revolutionize art forms. Artists would be able to perceive a wider range of color and sounds and express them in their work.¹⁶

Besant's concern with what she saw as the deadlock in social conditions has been amply described in previous chapters. It was summarized in the subtitle to her chapter on the subject, "Luxury and Want Face to Face." She stated that one-tenth of the population in Great Britain was condemned to a life of misery and want, whereas in India the figure was as great as one-sixth of the population. She called these people "the submerged classes."¹⁷

Since the present civilization did not live by the Law of Brotherhood it would pass away. This had been the fate of all past civilizations. The new civilization that was to be developed would live according to the Law of Brotherhood. Besant put her hope for the future in the young people of the coming generation. "For it is they who shall bring about the better conditions, Brotherhood in practice, the welfare of the people."¹⁸

Besant expected that the New Civilization would arise during the development of the new sub-race and that it would not be necessary to wait until the evolution of the new Root Race to achieve a civilization based on the Law of Brotherhood.

I look for a civilisation in the days to come, even before the next great human type has thoroughly developed, in which we shall have a civilisation of comradeship, a civilisation in which we can easily meet together socially, in which all will be educated, will be trained in good manners and courtesy and the graces of human life.¹⁹

Besant felt that World War I delivered the death blow to the fifth sub-race civilization in order to prepare for the emergence of the sixth sub-race civilization.²⁰

The final proof that Besant pointed to concerning the imminent appearance of the World-Teacher was a general world-wide expectation of a great spiritual Teacher. Many Christians were looking for the second coming of Christ. Muslims in Africa were expecting the Mahdi. Buddhists in Burma were expecting the Lord Maitreya and therefore responded favorably to the Order of the Star in the East.²¹

Besant believed that the most important work she could do was to prepare the world for the appearance of the World-Teacher, thus demonstrating the addition of messianism to her thought. It was clear to her that the condition of the world required the World-Teacher's presence. The World-Teacher always appeared at the beginning of a new sub-race to deliver a message that would become the religion of that civilization. There were unmistakable signs of that race developing in the United States as well as indications of the rise of the

land mass that would ultimately be the home of the new Root Race. The present world civilization had reached a point of deadlock in matters of religion, science, art and social conditions that only the World-Teacher could resolve. Every past civilization had been destroyed because it had not been based on the Law of Brotherhood. The coming civilization would truly be based on the Law of Brotherhood since the members of the new sub-race and ultimately the members of the new Root Race would have the buddhic faculty of intuition developed that would enable them to perceive that all were part of the divine unity. Although Besant saw the evolution of the Sixth Root Race as being very gradual, she felt that the new civilization of love and comradeship would be accomplished very soon with the development of the new sub-race.

The Manu and the World-Teacher

According to Besant, the World-Teacher was one of three personages who stood near the top of the Occult Hierarchy for the planet earth. These were the Maha-Chohan, the Manu, and the Bodhisattva.

There are seven main lines of evolution, and each line is made up of the lower Devas, or elementals, or nature spirits, minerals, vegetables, animals, and human beings, so that there are seven groups of evolving living creatures in our world, all growing towards perfection side by side.²²

The Maha-Chohan governed five of these lines of evolution assisted by the Masters, and their superiors, the Chohans. The other two lines were the Ruling Depart-

ment headed by the Manu, and the Teaching Department headed by the Bodhisattva.

Each Root Race had its own Manu so there were seven Manus in each evolutionary period. The Lord Vaivasvata was the Manu of the fifth Root Race. Besant felt that the Manu of the coming race had appointed her to work for the actualization of the New Civilization. "I am His agent, and I have later to help to build up the free civilisation of India and the new civilisation of California."²³

Acting upon her orders from the Manu of the Sixth Root Race, the Chohan Maurya, Besant purchased land in the Ojai Valley "on which could be raised a model in miniature of the Coming Civilization, for the helping and training of the new human type, the sixth sub-race, now multiplying in California."²⁴ The Happy Valley Association was formed to accept the donations of those wishing to contribute to the work. The Happy Valley would be the location where the members of the sixth sub-race would be separated from the other races. Some of these children would be born in the Happy Valley and others would be guided to move to that location. These individuals would be of all nationalities. Writing in 1930, Besant explained that the growth of the community at the Happy Valley must proceed slowly, so settlers were prohibited for two years.²⁵ However, Besant envisioned that the Happy Valley, as a miniature of the New Civilisation would "have economic Socialism, practical Brotherhood, as its basis, added to that hierarchical form of Government which places the Government in the hands of the Wise."²⁶ In the Happy Valley each industry would be cooperatively run and there would be no "individualistic enterprises."²⁷ Besant did not live long enough to try to actualize her

plans for the Happy Valley, and Josephine Ransom reported in 1938 that most of the land had been leased to cultivators.²⁸

While there were several Manus working at the same time, there was only one Bodhisattva or World-Teacher at any given time, and he was not so closely connected with any one Root Race. The World-Teacher presently resided in his physical body in the Himalayas. This physical body was an extremely delicate and sensitive instrument.

It is of enormous value as a physical organ, of tremendous power, and is adapted to those powers, answers to their vibrations and radiates out with the least possible obstruction, those beneficent forces for which He is the great Centre in the world. If He came amongst us as He is now, in the body that He usually wears, instead of laying aside that body, His great power would have to be expended so largely in protecting it from injury and destruction, in protecting it from the contact of the rough world and of our human bodies, that there would be a great waste of the higher energies in keeping that body uninjured when going out amongst us. . . .²⁹

For this reason a body must be trained for the World-Teacher's use in the outside world. Besant believed Jesus was trained in such a manner by the Essenes. At his baptism, the Christ or the World-Teacher descended upon Jesus, who taught for three years until the body was crucified. The World-Teacher allowed this physical body to be crucified because his continuing presence was giving rise to hatred which made it impossible to

continue to manifest his love. The disciple Jesus surrendered his physical body in loving sacrifice to the Christ, but he retained his subtle bodies. Jesus was now a Master and he was guiding the Christian church. Like Jesus, Krishnamurti was trained to be the vehicle of the World-Teacher. Gradually, his physical body was to become dominated by a fragment of the consciousness of the World-Teacher.³⁰

The World-Teacher as manifested in the outer world would be of the type of the Sixth Root Race and would possess strong qualities of buddhi. Thus he would be very different from the Fifth Root Race which was characterized by manas or mind. For this reason, it was very likely that the World-Teacher would be misunderstood and rejected by most people.³¹

. . . He is sure to say and do things that are not on a line with our ways, ideas and conventions, and many of which will be exceedingly unpleasant to the ordinary man and woman.³²

The primary characteristic of the World-Teacher as manifested in the world would be love and service, because the World-Teacher being an individual whose buddhi was fully activated was the "Lord of Service."³³ Service or sacrifice was "the only thing which really can bring happiness and peace to the human race. . . ."³⁴ Sacrifice was the only means by which the world could be saved.³⁵

Besant saw her major contribution to the principle of service as preparing the physical vehicle of the "Lord of Service" as well as preparing the world to receive his message. As the Essenes had trained Jesus to be the physical vehicle of the Christ or the World-Teacher, so the next physical vehicle,

Krishnamurti, would be trained by Theosophists. Krishnamurti would give up his physical body in loving sacrifice to be occupied by the Lord Maitreya so that he could teach his message of love and brotherhood. The World-Teacher would demonstrate the buddhic characteristics of the coming Sixth Root Race and thus would likely appear strange and incomprehensible to members of the Fifth Root Race. In addition to her work for the preparation of the World-Teacher, Besant felt that she was a direct agent for the Manu of the coming Race, that member of the Occult Hierarchy who guided the development of the new Race. Besant felt that her work in India and her purchasing of land in California to be the founding site of the New Civilization was in accordance with direct orders from the Manu.

Continuity and Discontinuity with Blavatsky Concerning the World-Teacher

A number of Theosophists objected to Besant's message and mission concerning the World-Teacher. Besant recognized that these members had coined the pejorative term "Neo-Theosophy" to indicate that the proclamation of the World-Teacher and the progressive messianic movement as embodied in the Order of the Star of the East was a departure from Theosophy as taught by Madame Blavatsky. Blavatsky had predicted that a "Torch Bearer of Truth" would appear in the last quarter of the twentieth century. Besant explained that the World-Teacher was not the "Torch-Bearer of Truth."³⁶ Besant stressed continuity with Blavatsky by reference to secret teachings that Blavatsky only

passed on to her more advanced students, and Besant bolstered her statements by saying that these things had been communicated to her by her own Master.

Starting, then, from that standpoint, we find certain things were said by H. P. Blavatsky as regards the nature of the Society, and certain things by the Masters themselves. Both are very important for us in consideration of the immediate future. The first of these things was indicated by hints which the more advanced students could understand--that the inner purpose of the Society was to prepare the world for the coming of a new Race, and to be itself the nucleus of that Race; that one of the Teachers was to be the Manu of the race, the other the Bodhisattva. Now those exact facts were unpublished at the time, but they passed from one to the other among the more advanced students of that period. Coming into the Society in 1889, this particular fact did not come within my knowledge until 1895. After the Coulomb struggle the Society for a time dropped away from the occult path on which H. P. Blavatsky had started it, and these ideas fell out of sight and were forgotten except by a limited number. In 1895 they were re-communicated to myself by my own Master, and have since been passed on to the older members of the Theosophical Society.³⁷

According to Besant, Blavatsky taught, particularly to her Hindu students, that the Masters M and K.H., who were considered to be the true founders of the Theosophical Society, would be the Manu and the

Bodhisattva of the Sixth Root Race, and that the Theosophical Society was to play a central role in the development of the Sixth Root Race. The Master M was the Manu of the Sixth Root Race and he had begun his work in cooperation with the Manu of the Fifth Root Race by gathering into the Theosophical Society the seeds of the Sixth Root Race. Similarly the Master K.H. would be the Bodhisattva of the Sixth Root Race, and it was he who had said that the Theosophical Society would be "the cornerstone of the future religion of humanity."³⁸ Since the Master M was Besant's own guru or Master, she was claiming a very special revelation and relationship to the Manu of the Sixth Root Race. The Master K.H. was C. W. Leadbeater's guru.³⁹

However, Besant's teaching concerning the World-Teacher could accurately be called Neo-Theosophy since Blavatsky in predicting the rise of the new sub-race and Root Race had not simultaneously predicted the appearance of a World-Teacher or Bodhisattva. The final volume of The Secret Doctrine consists of papers written by Blavatsky which were arranged and published posthumously by Besant. As Besant pointed out in the preface, these papers were not put into a final form by their author, and so they contain many inconsistencies. Besant felt that this was particularly true of the section entitled "The Mystery of the Buddha." However, in spite of the internal inconsistencies of these writings, they do evidence a very different understanding of terms such as "Buddha" and "Bodhisattva" from that of Annie Besant. Here a "Bodhisattva" was a principle or vehicle of not just a "Buddha" but of all humans.⁴⁰ Jesus and Gautama were not the earthly vehicles of the Bodhisattva or World-Teacher, but were

vehicles of one of the seven great entities who were "called Devas, Dhyani Chohans, or Dhyani Buddhas, or again, Planetary Angels. . . ."41 The person who was selected to be such a vehicle was chosen because of his extraordinary purity and spirituality.

The first two volumes of The Secret Doctrine were published in final form during Blavatsky's lifetime. They clearly stated that there was a Manu who guided the evolution of each Root Race.⁴² The passage that came closest to describing a World-Teacher referred to a "Being" or Maha-Guru who was called the "Great Sacrifice" because he continuously postponed his own final enlightenment within this life cycle to show the way to others. He guided the work of other "less divine Teachers and instructors of mankind" and it was from him that "all the great historically known Sages and Hierophants, such as the Rishi Kapila, Hermes, Enoch, Orpheus, etc., etc., have branched off."⁴³ Elsewhere in The Secret Doctrine Blavatsky wrote that seven Bodhisattvas, "the human correspondents of the Dhyani-Buddhas," came during each Round and that so far only four had come.⁴⁴ Still elsewhere Blavatsky explained that there were seven Dhyani-Buddhas who were "the 'celestial' Buddhas, of whom the human Buddhas were the manifestations in the world of form and matter."⁴⁵ Each of these Buddhas manifested in his corresponding Root Race, and so far only five had been manifested. The two remaining would come in the Sixth and Seventh Root Races.⁴⁶ Specifically, Maitreya Buddha was the last of the Avatars and Buddhas and would appear in the Seventh Root Race. Humanity was presently in the Kali-Yuga, "our present terrifically materialistic age of Darkness" so "a new Savior of Humanity" could not appear at this time.⁴⁷

While Besant clearly deviated from Blavatsky in her description of the World-Teacher, she based her authority on her own occult experience. She claimed a special relationship with the Master Morya whom she said was not only one of the founders of the Theosophical Society but was the Manu of the coming Race. She said that she received direct orders from him concerning her efforts to prepare for the New Civilization. Master Kuthumi, the second founder of the Theosophical Society, would be the Bodhisattva of the coming Race and therefore it was with the utmost authority that he proclaimed that Theosophy would be the cornerstone of the future religion. Finally, Besant claimed to have communicated directly with the Lord Maitreya, the present Bodhisattva. She visited him either in her lower mental or causal bodies.⁴⁸ However, Besant did not set herself up as a charismatic leader with sole access to the source of authority. She was usually accompanied by Leadbeater on her visits to the Lord. After she lost her psychic faculties, Besant relied on Leadbeater, Arundale, and Wedgewood to inform her of occult events. During the process of unifying his consciousness with the Lord, Krishnamurti would also bring through messages from the Lord Maitreya and the Masters M and K.H.

The New World Religion

The purpose of the World-Teacher's manifestation was to deliver a New Religion that would become the religion of the new sub-race and the New Civilization. Besant defined religion as

. . . man's search for God, and God's answer to the search through Teachers who, by

long and patient effort, had awakened the Hidden God within Themselves, and so were able to evoke an answer from the Hidden God who sleeps in every human being.⁴⁹

The search for God was the "inner urge to know the greater Self" and the great Teachers of humankind deliver "the religions of the world" which "might fairly be regarded as the answers of God without to this urge within the members of the human race. . . ." ⁵⁰ The work of religion was

. . . to change our attitude and object in life, to seek unselfish, rather than selfish, ideals, and unselfishness ever widening out into larger and larger circles, until at last it shall embrace in one mighty Brotherhood everything that lives.⁵¹

Each world religion revealed one aspect of God and all of these aspects were necessary for a complete understanding and "Every one of them contributes something special to the making of the World-Religion of the future."⁵² Hinduism proclaimed the two inter-related ideas of the Immanence of God and the Solidarity of man; Zoroastrianism emphasized Purity; Buddhism taught right knowledge, right understanding, right thinking; the old Greek religion taught Beauty and the old Roman religion emphasized Law; the message of Egypt was Science; Christianity emphasized Self-sacrifice; Judaism taught the importance of Righteousness.⁵³

In the past the great Teachers taught authoritatively because humanity was still in its childhood.

This dogmatic stage is necessary in sciences as in religions, and it is the condition under which alone rapid progress is

possible for the student. It enables him to work by the experience of others, and to utilise the knowledge which comes to him from the past. A dogma is the statement of a truth, or of what is thought to be a truth, imposed by outside authority.⁵⁴

However, unlike science, religion had made dogma a permanent and necessary part of its belief, so that when an individual began to grow out of his evolutionary childhood and began to exercise his own intellect, an open revolt was necessary. This sceptical stage was a healthy and normal state and was necessary for further growth. The individual could take three different roads from the sceptical stage. If he was unable to find the answers that he sought, he might return to the dogmatic stage. Or he might remain for the present life in the sceptical stage. In this case he

. . . will learn, through the loss of the belief in man's immortality, the lesson of the purest altruism which man can acquire, and he will be the next best thing to the illuminated Mystic, the high-minded and tolerant Sceptic, equal to all that life and death can bring.⁵⁵

Besant identified Charles Bradlaugh as being this type and expressed confidence that in his next life he would pass to the next stage. The next stage, which was preferably the one to which the individual should grow, was that of the Mystic, a person who had developed the faculty to perceive the God within himself and the facts of the subtler worlds.⁵⁶

Elsewhere Besant distinguished between the mystic and the occultist; both were paths belonging to the

Science of Yoga and their goal was the same, i.e. "to bring human consciousness to the Real and the Eternal. . . ."57

The mystic finds it by plunging down into the depths of his own nature, putting aside everything that is passing, everything that is transient, everything that is temporary, using . . . the Sanskrit phrase, 'Neti, neti--not this, not this'. . .58

Once the mystic discovered the unchanging Eternal, he must remain in silence and could not teach what he had found because it was beyond the mental level.⁵⁹

The occultist was on a different path although it led to the same goal. The occultist developed faculties by which he learned to understand and operate on the various subtle levels of the universe. In this way the occultist learned to control "all the powers of nature." On the occult path it was possible to err and take the "left-hand path." The occultist avoided this and stuck to the right-hand path by dedicating himself to service.

For if there be in the occultist the desire to possess, if he does not purge himself of all desire for aught but service, if he does not from his very heart tear out the root of selfishness and seek only the larger hope, the God in all, then his path is a path of terrible danger, and many are the wrecks, says H. P. Blavatsky, that strew the path.⁶⁰

Besant anticipated that there would be many mystics and occultists in the New Civilization. The new sub-race would be marked by its intuition and therefore its religion would be based on direct experience and knowledge rather than faith. Besant

defined intuition as "a recognition of truth at sight, a recognition of truth that comes from the inner life and not from that life working through the external instruments of matter."⁶¹

Besant began to speak of the New Religion as being the World Religion. She also called it the Fellowship of Faiths in order to indicate that this religion would promote brotherhood and unity among the existing world religions. In 1925, Besant attempted to provide the World Religion with a minimal organizational form. She published a list of the "Basic Truths" of the World Religion and invited organizations to join the Fellowship of the World Religion while maintaining their autonomy. G. S. Arundale was designated as the Recorder of the World Religion, and his function was simply to keep a current list of the subscribing organizations. The General Council of the Theosophical Society endorsed this statement of belief, thus, in Besant's view, making the Theosophical Society the true cornerstone of the New Religion.⁶²

The statement of basic truths listed belief in one Self-Existent Life underlying all things, the manifestation of this Life as the Logos worshipped under different names in different religions, a Hierarchy of ṛṣis, sages, saints, and devas or angels who rule and guide our earth, and reincarnation as the means by which human beings evolved and which entailed life on earth, the intermediate state, and heavenly life. In other words, the Basic Truths of Religion consisted of Theosophical tenets, with the addition of a statement of belief in World-Teachers as members of the Occult Hierarchy.⁶³

Besant believed that these doctrines would be taught by the World-Teacher and that they would become

the tenets of a New Religion that would promote brotherhood in the New Civilization. The New Religion would be based on the personal experience of the mystics and occultists of the New Civilization rather than presented as an authoritarian message. The Theosophical Society in subscribing to these doctrines and promoting them to the rest of the world was the cornerstone of the New Religion.

Krishnamurti

The Process of Identification with the World-Teacher

Dating from a time early in his training, Krishnamurti often wondered why he was chosen to carry out the role of the World-Teacher. He was very much embarrassed by displays of devotion toward himself. Nevertheless, he made every effort to do what was expected of him and maintained a sincere belief in the Masters that was not shaken until his brother's death. While he lost confidence in the psychic messages of C. W. Leadbeater and others, he continued to regard Annie Besant with the deepest love and respect until her death.

Krishnamurti's devotees felt that the Lord Maitreya first manifested himself through Krishnamurti on December 28, 1912. This occurred on the Theosophical Society's grounds in Benares while Krishna was handing out certificates of membership to members of the Order of the Star in the East. Leadbeater described the incident in a letter:

All at once the Hall was filled with a tremendous power, which was so evidently

flowing through Krishna that the next member fell at his feet, overwhelmed by this marvellous rush of force. I have never seen or felt anything in the least like it; it reminded one irresistably of the rushing, mighty wind, and the outpouring of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost. The tension was enormous, and every one in the room was most powerfully affected.⁶⁴

This was one time that Krishnamurti did not appear embarassed by such attention and he remained poised while his devotees, including his brother, prostrated themselves one by one at his feet.

Early in 1920, Krishnamurti privately expressed to Lady Emily Lutyens that he did not "care a damn" for getting in touch with the Masters, but in the same letter he described an incident during which he fainted and momentarily felt that he was possessed by someone.⁶⁵

In 1922 while living in Ojai, California, for the sake of his brother's health, Krishnamurti resolved to begin meditating to try to regain contact with the Masters. This marked the beginning of a very disturbing and painful process. The symptoms included a painful lump on the back of the neck, fainting and falling, sensitivity to touch and sound, and general delirium. The witnesses to these symptoms interpreted them as marking the raising of Krishnamurti's kundalini. On this initial occasion in California, after suffering for three days, Krishnamurti finally found peace while sitting under a pepper tree. Krishnamurti and four witnesses testified that they felt the presence of the Lord Maitreya that evening.⁶⁶ This process continued intermittently throughout

Krishnamurti's life and in the early years he would occasionally bring through messages from the Masters.⁶⁷

Annie Besant and others believed that the next great public manifestation of the Lord Maitreya occurred while Krishnamurti was addressing members of the Order of the Star in the East under the huge banyan tree at Adyar. When speaking of the Lord, he suddenly shifted to the first person.

We are all expecting Him who is the embodiment of nobility, and He will be with us soon. He is with us. He comes to lead us all to that perfection wherein is eternal happiness. He comes to lead us and He comes to those who have not understood, who have suffered, who are unhappy, who are unenlightened. He comes only to those who want, who desire, who long. I COME TO THOSE WHO WANT SYMPATHY, WHO WANT HAPPINESS, WHO ARE LONGING TO BE RELEASED, WHO ARE LONGING TO FIND HAPPINESS IN ALL THINGS. I COME TO REFORM AND NOT TO TEAR DOWN. I COME TO BUILD UP, NOT TO DESTROY.⁶⁸

Gradually, Krishnamurti began to speak more often as the Lord Maitreya. He was convinced that the Lord was using his body and testified that "I feel like a crystal vase, a jar that has been cleaned and now anybody in the world can put a beautiful flower in it and that flower shall live in the vase and never die."⁶⁹

In the beginning, Krishnamurti most commonly announced his new status by saying that he was now one with his Beloved. ". . . I have been able to unite the source and the goal, I have been able to become one with the Beloved."⁷⁰

Speaking in terms that adhered more closely to Annie Besant's expectations, he said that he was now the Teacher. It had long been his ambition to escape all limitations and be one with "my Teacher, my Guru, my Beloved, or what ever name you may like to give him. . . ." ⁷¹ Now that he had become one with the Teacher, Krishnamurti reported that it was his desire to share that liberation and happiness with others, to free others from limitation.

In explaining the nature of his relationship with the Lord Maitreya, Krishnamurti said that his own personal identity had disappeared.

. . . Krishnamurti as such, no longer exists. As the river enters the sea and loses itself in the sea, so Krishnamurti has entered into that Life which is represented by some as The Christ, by others as The Buddha, by others still, as the Lord Maitreya. Hence Krishnamurti as an entity fully developed has entered into that Sea of Life and is the Teacher, because the moment you enter into that Life--which is the fulfillment of all Teachers, which is the life of all the Teachers--the individual as such ceases. ⁷²

In this manner Krishnamurti asserted his independence. He had reached maturity and was no longer a Theosophical ward. He had attained identity with his Beloved, his Teacher, and he was now a teacher in his own right with a unique message of his own.

Implications of Krishnamurti's Message for Annie Besant's Beliefs

Krishnamurti's teachings posed a difficulty for Annie Besant and other Theosophists because he said that many major elements of their belief were ultimately insignificant and even impediments to spiritual development. Firstly, he downplayed the importance of the Lord Maitreya. He advised members of the Order of the Star not to puzzle over the issue of his identity.⁷³ Instead he advised that they should turn their attention to his message. His value as a teacher should be judged by the truth of his teaching. "If what I say has Truth in it--if it shines by its own light, you should follow and understand that light, and that is all that matters."⁷⁴

Krishnamurti's reason for downplaying his identity with the Lord Maitreya, which he believed had taken place, was that he had concluded that each individual must liberate himself. Nothing was gained by reliance on any spiritual authority. So he discouraged devotional attitudes directed toward himself as the World-Teacher as well as the attitude of many Theosophists in looking to the Masters for guidance in spiritual evolution. He did not deny the existence of the Masters, but said that reliance on them would not lead to liberation.

If your thought is pursuing comfort, you will have shelters, gurus, Masters. You will at once say, "Do not Masters exist?" I say to that, Masters, apparitions, devas, angels, have nothing to do with the realization of spirituality.⁷⁵

In 1929 Krishnamurti dissolved the Order of the Star in Annie Besant's presence at a Star Camp meeting because he realized that despite his teachings its members still tended to look to him as an authority. In explaining his action, he said that each person must liberate himself and that it was not productive to look to any authority for spirituality or enlightenment. It was unproductive to look to the authority of any discipline, sect, or religion, as well as the authority of any individual. If authority was looked to then inevitably an organization would grow around it, and organizations only limited Truth. Krishnamurti explained that his only concern was "to set man free." Since members of the Order of the Star were ignoring his message concerning their own responsibility for their enlightenment and were too concerned with himself as an authority, he found it necessary to dissolve the organization.⁷⁶

Since Krishnamurti rejected all authority as a means of spiritual evolution, he absolutely refused to have anything to do with Besant's dream of founding a new world religion. This was a major reason for dissolving the Order of the Star. Krishnamurti defined religion as "the frozen thoughts of men, out of which they build temples," and he held that "all the great Teachers of the world come not to found new religions, but to free people from religions."⁷⁷ In response to the question as to whether the Liberal Catholic Church was the instrument of the Lord Maitreya as Besant had declared in 1925, Krishnamurti refused to answer affirmatively or negatively since that would be an imposition of authority. While urging the questioner to look for himself to see if the Liberal Catholic Church was a source of freedom and happiness, he

emphasized that all religions "are the productions of crystallized, frozen thought."⁷⁸

Not only was Krishnamurti opposed to the founding of a new religion centered around himself and his teachings, but he was indifferent to whether or not there was a new sub-race developing in southern California that would be particularly receptive to his message. When asked about the new sub-race he merely replied that "Wherever there is a suitable environment for the fulfillment of Life, it will fulfill itself."⁷⁹

Krishnamurti taught that if it is fruitless to rely on the authority of persons, gurus, sects or religions, it is equally fruitless to rely on the authority of any discipline, method, or path. This was in direct contradiction to Theosophy's emphasis on the importance of meditation, and pursuing "the Path of Purification" until one attained the same consciousness as the Masters. In his early career as teacher, Krishnamurti did encourage meditation as a method to achieve enlightenment.⁸⁰ Later, he concluded that although he was aware of the method by which he attained his own liberation, to tell others what to do would be an exercise of authority and would be "a limitation of truth."⁸¹ In his mature thought, Krishnamurti taught that there was no method. The means and the end were identical. Liberation consisted of a "constant voluntary awareness" or "choiceless awareness" which ended all thought processes and which entailed the perception of unity. This was done instantly and could not be achieved by a method. Setting a goal and striving to achieve it was actually the experience of becoming and prevented the experience of "what is." Once thought ceased, the individual attained to a higher level of intelligence in which the

mind was fully aware and alert, and could cause spontaneous action. Ordinary thought must cease because it created division or a space between the individual and "what is." During his addresses, Krishnamurti encouraged his listeners to experience at that moment this "instantaneous act of self-observation."⁸² Krishnamurti defined true meditation as being this condition of watchfulness or observation without assessment of both the objective and subjective worlds.⁸³

The doctrine of reincarnation which was basic to Annie Besant's thought was irrelevant to Krishnamurti since he saw liberation as existing in the present moment. When he first began to teach, he explained that belief in reincarnation could even impede liberation if attention was put upon past experiences or hopes for the future.

NOW is the moment of eternity. When you understand that, you have transcended all laws, limitations, karma and reincarnation. These, though they may be facts, have no value, because you are living in the eternal.⁸⁴

Although Krishnamurti rejected many concepts that were very dear to Besant as being barriers to liberation, he was in complete agreement with her on very fundamental points. First, he fulfilled her prediction that his teaching would not be based on authority, but on the direct experience of the individual. In addition, his point of view was monistic. Reality was a unity. Finally, after attaining the experience of oneness with all things, he felt that the natural consequence of this experience was his desire to serve. He felt that the best way he could serve was to function as a signpost pointing to this experience. This was

the best means to promote brotherhood in the world and eliminate conflict since "the individual problem is the world problem."⁸⁵

As a young man, Krishnamurti discovered that it was very easy for him to project himself into other people and things, and to feel what they were feeling. He described one such experiment where he was able to perceive in such a manner the activities in the village in the Ojai valley. "It was probably my imagination, but it was good enough for me."⁸⁶ He went on to say

. . . it is quite easy if you can make your emotions swell, you can feel what the trees round you are feeling, the birds and the people--then we should want to act. If you see misery, you want to act, you want to relieve it, you want to change that misery.⁸⁷

In his mature thought, Krishnamurti did not suggest that this perception was an act of the imagination. He wanted everyone to have a perception of oneness. He had this perception and desired that others should have it. In his desire for everyone to share in this perception he was in agreement with Besant as to the nature of the millennial goal. He felt that this was the only way true brotherhood could be attained in the world.

The reason why you have to find the Truth for yourself, why you have to establish the Truth for yourself, is in order to have peace in the world.⁸⁸

Annie Besant's Response

After Krishnamurti began speaking as the World-Teacher, Besant eloquently acknowledged his new status.

Our Krishnaji has had, from the outer world, a far better reception than had the World Teacher when last He trod the paths of our lower world [as Jesus Christ]. He has been ridiculed, mocked, scoffed at, but the inner power has lately shown out so strongly through the veil of flesh, that crowds throng round him, and through his message, iconoclastic as it seems to many, has come a compelling force that, while it raises opposition in many, yet pierces into the hearts that are open, is seen by the eyes that are not dazzled by its almost blinding light.

And I, who have known him from his childhood, who have watched his growth, loved the perfection of his unfolding character, seen the manhood raised into Divinity, I gladly bear the witness that Peter bore of old. And I thankfully offer myself to him as disciple, who have been his guardian and his mother, rejoicing to know that I can continue to serve in this lower world the manifestation--as much as may be in a physical body--of Him before whom, in the inner world, we all bow in reverent devotion.⁸⁹

She explained that instead of a possession of Krishnamurti's body by the Lord Maitreya there had been a blending of Krishnamurti's consciousness with that of the Lord. However, the blending was with only a fragment of the Lord Maitreya's consciousness and not the whole as this would make Krishnamurti omniscient. This development was different from what Besant had expected and she pointed to it as showing that she could not

know everything and that she acknowledged that she was prepared for surprises from Krishnamurti. "People always want to make a greater Being in their own image, and then complain if He is different."⁹⁰

Despite Krishnamurti's teachings, she retained her belief in the power of the Masters to help their disciples. She began her address on the fifty-fourth anniversary of the Theosophical Society with an invocation to the Masters.

. . . I ask you, those of you who believe in the Masters, to join me in the annual invocation to Those whom we believe to be our Guides, leading us from the unreal to the Real, from darkness to Light, from death to Immortality. 'May Those who are the embodiment of Love Immortal, bless with Their protection the Society established to do Their Will on Earth; may They ever guard it by Their Power, inspire it with Their Wisdom and energise it with Their Activity.'⁹¹

Besant partially acknowledged Krishnamurti's statements on religion as being the crystallized thoughts of men by warning that the Theosophical Society must avoid orthodoxy, "which would be its death by fossilisation."⁹² However, she was not willing to grant with Krishnamurti that religious organizations were hindrances to spiritual advancement. Instead she said that Krishnamurti's task was to break only dead forms, not those that contain life.

He cannot break any real living belief. He can and does break and shatter beliefs that are not living, but are forms whose life is gone. That that is his present work, I once heard from One, whom many of us regard as a

very high authority, the highest in the world, that Krishnaji's present work is 'to destroy all outworn forms'. The meaning of outworn forms is forms that have lost their life. He cannot destroy any forms animated by life. He does destroy in the most effective way all those forms which are accepted without knowledge.⁹³

When pressed about how to reconcile Krishnamurti's teachings concerning organizations with membership in the Theosophical Society, she answered that organizations were indeed useless for progress in spirituality but they were useful in propagating knowledge. ". . . but spirituality which is the knowledge of God, the One Life, can only come to us from the unfoldment of the God within us."⁹⁴

Despite Krishnamurti's statements that he would have nothing to do with disciples and the founding of a new religion, Besant remained convinced that a religion would be based on Krishnamurti's teachings after his death.

I do not say he will make one [a new religion]. But I think that his disciples will form a new religion out of his teachings. I am sure they will. He will not do it. No World Teacher makes a religion. His disciples do it. I quite expect that Krishnaji's disciples, after he has passed away, will probably form a new religion out of His teachings. That will be the religion of the new sub-race.⁹⁵

Besant remained convinced that the Theosophical Society would be the cornerstone of the religion of the future. Even Krishnamurti had acknowledged to a group

at Ommen that Theosophy was the background of his teaching, but Besant explained that even though Theosophy would be the cornerstone of the new religion, she did not expect Krishnamurti to teach Theosophy all over again.⁹⁶

Besant admitted that where she did not understand Krishnamurti she suspended her judgment.

I am his inferior and where I do not understand I suspend my judgment hoping to grow into understanding. I cannot pour out Life as Krishnaji pours it out. I can only help the Life that is being poured out to be embodied in new forms. That I am trying to do. I thankfully take the Life that he pours out and I do not try to put it into any forms at present. The time has not come.⁹⁷

Besant summed up Krishnamurti's message as well as her own by saying that "The best way to help Krishnaji is to be dead against separateness. If ever you see it oppose it." She reconciled her work with that of Krishnamurti by saying "we are two sides of one work."⁹⁸

Dr. Besant is at the head of one side and Krishnaji of the other. One is the work of the Manu the other of the Bodhisattva. They always work together.⁹⁹

Therefore Besant recognized that Krishnamurti's teaching was in accord with her own concerning the attempt to promote brotherhood through the individual perception of unity as opposed to the individual perception of separateness. While acknowledging that she was Krishnamurti's spiritual inferior she reconciled her work with his by saying that they were working along two separate but complementary lines,

that of the Manu and that of the World-Teacher. Besant acknowledged that she was prepared to be surprised by Krishnamurti and that she could not know exactly how he would perform his task. But even though Krishnamurti steadfastly refused to have anything to do with the founding of a New Religion, Besant remained convinced that his followers would found a New Religion based on his teachings after his death. This teaching or New Religion would be the basis of the New Civilization that would be characterized by a condition of true brotherhood. Besant remained convinced that this would be the manner in which her messiah, Krishnamurti as the World-Teacher, would bring about the millennial condition or a transformed humanity for which she had worked most of her life.

Notes

¹Annie Besant, "Why We Believe in the Coming of a World-Teacher," Part 2, The Herald of the Star 3 (August 1914): 463, 465.

²Annie Besant, "Why We Believe in the Coming of a World-Teacher," Part 1, The Herald of the Star 3 (July 1914): 390.

³Annie Besant, "Public Lecture," The Herald of the Star 16 (November 1927): 413; Annie Besant, C. Jinarajadasa, and G. S. Arundale, The Real and the Unreal: Being the Four Convention Lectures delivered at Adyar at the Forty-seventh Anniversary of the Theosophical Society, December, 1922 (Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1923), p. 30; Annie Besant, Civilisation's Deadlocks and the Keys (Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1924), p. 22; Annie Besant, The New Civilisation: Four Lectures Delivered at the Queen's Hall, London, in June 1927 (London: The Theosophical Publishing House Limited, 1927), pp. 10-11; Annie Besant, The Changing World and Lectures to Theosophical Students: Fifteen Lectures delivered in London during May, June, and July 1909 (Chicago: The Theosophical Press, n.d.), pp. 121-24.

⁴Besant, The Changing World, pp. 216-22.

⁵Ibid., p. 222.

⁶Annie Besant, "Theosophy and the New Order," The Theosophist 44 (October 1922): 21-22.

⁷Besant, The Changing World, pp. 199-200.

⁸Besant, "Why We Believe in the Coming of a World Teacher," Part 1, pp. 393-94.

⁹Annie Besant, "The New Continent," The Theosophist 33 (July 1912): 513.

¹⁰Annie Besant, "Religion: or God Manifesting as Love," The Theosophist 44 (February 1923): 497.

¹¹Ibid., pp. 500-3.

¹²Annie Besant, "Religion: or God Manifesting as Love," The Theosophist 44 (March 1923): 601-02; Annie

Besant, "Saviours of the World, or World-Teachers," The Theosophist 34 (September 1913): 848-55.

¹³Besant, The Changing World, p. 6.

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 7-16, 48-49, 55-57, 188-90.

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 17-21.

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 21-23, 70-74.

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 25, 28.

¹⁸Besant, The New Civilisation, p. 91.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 67.

²⁰Annie Besant, "The Wider Outlook," The Theosophist 38 (November 1916): 138.

²¹Besant, "Why We Believe in the Coming of a World Teacher," Part 1, p. 390.

²²A Server [pseud.], "The Hierarchy or The Rishis, Sages and Saints," in Our Elder Brethren: The Great Ones in the World's Service, ed. Annie Besant, (Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1934), p. 5.

²³Annie Besant, "To Members of the Theosophical Society," The Adyar Theosophist 51 (March 1930): 531.

²⁴The Happy Valley Association, (N.p., n.d.), p. 2.

²⁵Besant, "To the Members of the Theosophical Society," p. 530.

²⁶Besant, The New Civilisation, p. 83.

²⁷Ibid., p. 85.

²⁸Josephine Ransom, A Short History of the Theosophical Society, 1875-1937 (Adyar, Madras: Theosophical Publishing House, 1938), p. 479.

²⁹Annie Besant, "Dr. Besant's Talk to Members of the Order," The Herald of the Star 13 (August 1924): 332-33.

³⁰Annie Besant, "Aspects of the Christ: A Lecture to the Convention of England and Wales," The Theosophist 34 (November 1912): 182-83; Annie Besant, Superhuman Men in History and in Religion (Hollywood: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1919), pp. 24-25; Annie Besant, How a World Teacher Comes As Seen by Ancient and Modern Psychology: Four Lectures Delivered at the Queen's Hall, London, During June and July, 1926 (London: The Theosophical Publishing House Limited, 1926), pp. 44-46; Annie Besant, "The Light of the Star," Herald of the Star 8 (October 1919): 472; Besant, The Changing World, p. 310.

³¹Besant, The Changing World, pp. 240-41.

³²Besant, "Dr. Besant's Talk," p. 333.

³³Annie Besant, "Some Questions Concerning the Order of the Star in the East," The Herald of the Star 10 (August 1921): 232.

³⁴Annie Besant, "Address by Dr. Besant," The Herald of the Star 15 (August 1926): 315.

³⁵*Ibid.*, p. 316.

³⁶Annie Besant, "The Growth of the T.S." The Theosophist 33 (July 1912): 506-9; H. P. Blavatsky, The Key to Theosophy, 3d & rev. English ed. (London: The Theosophical Publishing Society, 1893), pp. 194-95.

³⁷Besant, The Changing World, pp. 228-29.

³⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 226-27, 233-35.

³⁹Mary Lutyens, Krishnamurti: The Years of Awakening (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1975), p. 14.

⁴⁰H. P. Blavatsky, The Secret Doctrine, The Adyar Edition (Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1971), 5:7-8, 365-68.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, p. 358.

⁴²H. P. Blavatsky, The Secret Doctrine, Blavatsky Collected Writings 1888 (Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1978), 2:309.

⁴³*Ibid.*, 1:207-08.

⁴⁴Ibid., 1:42.

⁴⁵Ibid., 1:108.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Ibid., 1:470.

⁴⁸Besant, "Dr. Besant's Talk," p. 333.

⁴⁹Annie Besant, "Ideals of the Future," The Herald of the Star 3 (February 1914): 68.

⁵⁰Besant, The New Civilisation, p. 27.

⁵¹Ibid., pp. 25-26.

⁵²Annie Besant, "A World-Religion," The Adyar Bulletin 6 (December 1913): 496.

⁵³Ibid., pp. 496-97.

⁵⁴Besant, "Ideals of the Future," p. 68.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 69.

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷Besant, The New Civilisation, p. 35.

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 36.

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 37.

⁶¹Ibid., p. 34.

⁶²Annie Besant and C. Jinarajadasa, "To the Members of the General Council of the Theosophical Society," The Theosophist 47 (December 1925): 408-11; Ransom, A Short History of the Theosophical Society 1875-1937, p. 470.

⁶³Besant and Jinarajadasa, "To the Members of the General Council of the Theosophical Society," p. 410.

⁶⁴Lutyens, The Years of Awakening, p. 55.

⁶⁵Ibid., pp. 112-13.

⁶⁶Ibid., pp. 152-60.

⁶⁷Ibid., pp. 178, 182, 187-88; Pupul Jayakar has reported that when she witnessed this process in Krishnamurti, he would make statements such as:

"This pain makes my body like steel--but, oh, so flexible, so pliant, without a thought. It is like a polishing--an examination."

"I have been soaked with gasoline. The tank is full."

"Amma [Annie Besant]--oh, God, give me peace. I know what they are up to. Call him back. I know when the limit of pain is reached, they will return. They know how much the body can stand."

"They are going to have fun with me tonight. I see the storm gathering. Oh, Christos!"

"They have burnt me so that there can be more emptiness [no thought]. They want to see how much of him can come."

"This is pure power--like that in a dynamo."

Later, when Jayakar asked Krishnamurti if the Lord Maitreya was causing this process, Krishnamurti would not respond. When she asked "Is it that we are witnessing the first mind that is operating fully, totally?" Krishnamurti responded, "Possibly."

Krishnamurti confided to Jayakar that for many years he had seen a face before him. He intimated that Leadbeater and Besant had seen the face, too, and they told him it was Maitreya Bodhisattva. Krishnamurti said that this was the face "that K's face was becoming." When the face disappeared, he did not know whether or not he had become one with it. See Pupul Jayakar, Krishnamurti: A Biography, (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986), pp. 126-28, 132, 408.

⁶⁸J. Krishnamurti, "Mr. Krishnamurti's concluding words of an address delivered to Star Members at Adyar on December 28th, 1925," The Herald of the Star 15 (January 1926): 2.

⁶⁹Lutyens, The Years of Awakening, p. 224.

⁷⁰J. Krishnamurti, "To Meet Again," The Herald of the Star 16 (September 1927): 347.

⁷¹J. Krishnamurti, "The Star Council, Welcome by Krishnaji, July 29th, 1927," The Herald of the Star 16 (September 1927): 333.

72J. Krishnamurti, "An Interview with Krishnaji, London, England, 20 June 1928," International Star Bulletin, 1928, no. 8:9; Years later Krishnamurti told Jayakar that the name Maitreya meant nothing to him, "But, the feeling of the Buddha has always been there. A feeling of enormity." Krishnamurti said,

I think there is a force which the Theosophists had touched but tried to make into something concrete. But, there was something they had touched and then tried to translate into their symbols and vocabulary, and so lost it. This feeling has been going on all through my life. . . .

Krishnamurti told Jayakar that his body had only one purpose and that was to reveal the teaching. "The manifestation has to take place, through a human body, naturally--the manifestation is not the teaching." In 1985 Krishnamurti told Jayakar that he knew when he would die. He said, "The manifestation has started to fade." See Jayakar, pp. 439-40, 488, 496, 498.

73J. Krishnamurti, "Seek Peace and Establish It," The Herald of the Star 16 (October 1927): 401.

74J. Krishnamurti, "Questions and Answers," International Star Bulletin, 1928, No. 10:9; By Jayakar's report, Krishnamurti held to this position until the end of his life.

Look what religions have done: concentrated on the teacher and forgotten the teaching. Why do we give such importance to the person of the teacher? The teacher may be necessary to manifest the teaching, but beyond that, what? The vase contains water; you have to drink the water, not worship the vase. Humanity worships the vase, forgets the water. (487)

75J. Krishnamurti, "An Address to the New York Theosophical Federation," International Star Bulletin, 1930, No. 5:22-23.

76J. Krishnamurti, "The Dissolution of the Order of the Star: A Statement by J. Krishnamurti," International Star Bulletin, 1929, No. 2 (September): 28-34.

⁷⁷J. Krishnamurti, "Questions and Answers," The Star 1 (June 1928): 10.

⁷⁸Krishnamurti, "Questions and Answers," International Star Bulletin, pp. 11-12.

⁷⁹Krishnamurti, "An Interview with Krishnaji," p. 13.

⁸⁰J. Krishnamurti, "Meditation and Contemplation," The Herald of the Star 16 (December 1927): 459-61.

⁸¹J. Krishnamurti, "The Coming Dawn," The Star 2 (February 1929): 6.

⁸²R. K. Shringy, Philosophy of J. Krishnamurti: A Systematic Study (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1976); Jacob Needleman, The New Religions (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1977), pp. 145-66.

⁸³Stuart Holroyd, The Quest of the Quiet Mind: The Philosophy of Krishnamurti (Wellingborough, England: The Aquarian Press, 1980), p. 89.

⁸⁴J. Krishnamurti, "Morning Talk, Tuesday, August 6," International Star Bulletin, 1929, No. 2 (September): 20.

⁸⁵Krishnamurti, "Seek Peace and Establish It," p. 399.

⁸⁶J. Krishnamurti, "Self-Preparation," The Herald of the Star 15 (April 1926): 139.

⁸⁷Ibid.

⁸⁸Krishnamurti, "Seek Peace and Establish It," p. 400.

⁸⁹Annie Besant, "Krishnaji," International Star Bulletin, 1928, No. 8:8.

⁹⁰Annie Besant, "To Members of the Theosophical Society," p. 533; Conversely, Leadbeater felt "The Coming has gone wrong" due to Krishnamurti's personality blocking the Lord Maitreya from using his body as a vehicle. "Leadbeater believed that Krishnamurti's teachings were destructive and dangerous. . . ." See Gregory Tillett, The Elder Brother:

A Biography of Charles Webster Leadbeater, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982), p. 240.

⁹¹Annie Besant, "Presidential Address," The Adyar Theosophist 51 (February 1930): 455.

⁹²Ibid., p. 456.

⁹³Annie Besant, "Questions and Answers Meeting," The Adyar Theosophist 51 (January 1930): 442.

⁹⁴Ibid., p. 443.

⁹⁵Ibid., p. 446.

⁹⁶Besant, "To Members of the Theosophical Society," p. 535.

⁹⁷Besant, "Questions and Answers Meeting," p. 446.

⁹⁸Besant, "To Members of the Theosophical Society," p. 535.

⁹⁹Ibid.

CHAPTER VIII

Conclusion

Elements of Continuity in Annie Besant's Thought

The preceeding chapters have demonstrated that Annie Besant's various careers were motivated by a typically Victorian belief in progress and desire to ameliorate current social conditions. This eventually led her to develop a pattern of ultimate concern that took the form of progressive messianism that combined pre-millenarian and post-millennial elements. Besant's thought as an atheist and socialist shows important elements of continuity with her later thought on Theosophy, India, and the World-Teacher. Further, it can be seen that the progressive messianism of Besant's later thought grew out of elements in Besant's earlier thought.

The typically Victorian belief in progress and desire to ameliorate current social conditions are the two basic elements conducive to Besant's millenarianism. It has been shown that Besant accepted as axiomatic the widely prevailing belief in inexorable human progress. Besant along with many others assumed that evolution was progressive. In addition, Besant along with many other thoughtful Victorians was disturbed by the presence of suffering and lack of progress in the lives of the English working class. Besant would extend this concern to India and to the world. Thus her millenarianism resulted from her desire to solve the world's problems and from her assumption that the problem of human suffering would inevitably be resolved.

The late nineteenth-century belief in progress entailed a sense of duty to posterity and a belief in the solidarity of humanity. These elements are clearly

seen in Besant's early thought. Her millenarianism was the expression of this sense of duty to subsequent generations and her millenarian desire for a collective salvation was the result of her belief in human solidarity.

Thus Besant's millenarian goal of Universal Brotherhood remained constant from her atheistic days onward, although her millenarianism was not fully developed at that time. Additionally, it has been shown that Besant's ultimate concern of service or self-sacrifice remained constant through her careers as atheist, socialist, Theosophist, Indian politician, and announcer of the imminent coming of the World Teacher. Atheism, socialism, and Besant's progressive messianism based on Theosophical philosophy were the patterns of ultimate concern or the complexes of belief that Besant constructed to support her ultimate concern.

Inspired by the writings of Comte, Besant very early conceived a desire to create a new religion devoted to the worship and service of humanity. As an atheist she felt that it was important to attack and discredit Christianity so that a new religion of humanity could be constructed. Just prior to becoming a Theosophist, Besant and W. T. Stead created the Law and Liberty League and its organ the Link with the hope of producing a new religion of humanity devoted to instilling a sense of brotherhood into all persons. This attempt to create a new religion was very short-lived, but Besant soon thereafter discovered the Theosophical Society which had as its first object to be a nucleus for the growth of Universal Brotherhood. Theosophical teachings concerning service and self-sacrifice appealed strongly to Besant's own most strongly held convictions. Predictions that Theosophy

would become the world religion of the future partially satisfied Besant's longing to be in the forefront of creating a new religion. However, this desire found its ultimate fulfillment in the creation of a progressive messianic movement around the person of J. Krishnamurti as the World-Teacher. The World-Teacher was to deliver a message that would become the New Religion of the New Civilization. This message would be one of brotherhood and service.

An additional element of continuity between Besant's earlier and later thought was her monism. While questioning the beliefs of her girlhood, Besant found that she was strongly attracted to pantheism. She rejected the idea of a theistic God separate from the suffering universe that he had created. Even though she was strongly attracted to pantheistic concepts found in eastern thought, while she was associated with atheists she settled for monistic materialism. Matter was the one substance and all consciousness was derived from appropriate combinations of matter. Even while proclaiming and defending this position Besant continued to question it, and she found that materialism did not satisfactorily explain certain psychological phenomena for her. Upon reading The Secret Doctrine Besant immediately adopted the monism of Theosophy, but she had been prepared for this by her earlier monistic views. Theosophical monism was a basic element of Besant's millenarianism since Universal Brotherhood was seen as being possible due to all things being a part of a great whole.

Related to Besant's monistic position was her continued questioning as to whether human beings possessed or could develop a faculty by which to perceive God. When Besant concluded that no such

faculty existed she found herself an atheist, defined as one who was without God. Initially, she held open the possibility that such a faculty could be developed, but after becoming more closely associated with atheistic and materialistic friends she dropped for awhile the hope in this possibility. When her interest in this question revived, she found in Theosophy a philosophy that held out the promise that individuals could indeed develop such a faculty. By such a faculty all persons could perceive that their brotherhood with all other persons consisted in their unity within the life of God. Additionally, Besant conceived an intense interest in developing faculties by which to perceive the subtler realms of matter as well as the subatomic components of matter of the physical plane. Interestingly, Besant was reported to have sacrificed these last named faculties in order to devote herself to accomplishing her millenarian goal through her work in India.

Theosophy also answered Besant's question concerning how human life on this planet was to be transformed. As an atheist and a socialist Besant had worked very hard for social reform, but she began to see that a deeper transformation was necessary. Besant found in Theosophy a doctrine that taught that human nature could be transformed by individual effort and that humanity as a whole would be transformed by new stages in human evolution.

Millenarian Elements in Annie Besant's Thought

This work has found that Annie Besant's thought combined pre-millenarian and post-millennial elements.

Pre-millenarianism has been defined as belief in a collective, terrestrial and imminent salvation which will be total and accomplished by superhuman agents in a catastrophic manner. Post-millennialism has been defined as a view of history that sees the collective and terrestrial salvation as being brought into being gradually through the work of human beings who are nonetheless under the impelling guidance of some superhuman force. Besant's belief in progress and gradual evolution was too strong to allow belief in a catastrophic transformation of the world. However, Besant's thought contained important elements that scholars have previously associated with pre-millenarianism.

Besant was concerned with a collective and terrestrial salvation from her atheistic days onward. She wanted to create a condition on earth in which all human beings would be able to live in comfort and happiness, and would be able to recognize the bonds of brotherhood connecting them to all other persons. Bradlaugh's National Secular Society emphasized the collectivity of this goal, with no person left out. Besant later turned to socialism because she felt that it was the best means by which to create this condition of happiness and because it emphasized collective forms of social organization as expressing brotherhood and unity. Besant's desire for a collective and terrestrial salvation continued most strongly in her Theosophical millenarianism and differed from pre-millenarian concepts in that this salvation was not just for the collective elect but for all persons. The developing sixth sub-race and the subsequent Sixth Root Race could in one sense be seen as the elect, but their

evolution would have an effect on all other members of the human race, thus accomplishing a salvation for all.

Besant's atheistic thought shows no evidence of a belief in a superhuman agent. As a socialist Besant took an important step toward belief in a superhuman agent with her belief that evolution would accomplish the transformation to socialism regardless of human cooperation. As a Theosophist, Besant continued to believe in progressive evolution, but she felt that evolution was guided by the will of the Logos, the supreme spiritual entity in this solar system. The Masters were additional superhuman agents who were perfect executors of the Will of the Logos. Further superhuman agents were found in the persons of the Manu and the Lord Maitreya. The Manu guided the evolution of the Root Race to which he was assigned. Besant believed that her own Master was the Manu of the Sixth Root Race and thus her work on behalf of the new race had divine sanction. Besant believed that the Lord Maitreya was about to make an imminent appearance on earth as the World-Teacher to deliver a message that would become the basis of the transformation to the New Civilization. This idea of a divine human incarnation whose purpose was to effect the collective and terrestrial salvation, marks the addition of messianism to Besant's millenarian thought.

Although Besant did not believe that the terrestrial salvation would be accomplished in a sudden and catastrophic manner, Besant's words and actions conveyed a strong sense of the imminence of the millennial resolution that in the past has been more typical of pre-millenarians. Yonina Talmon described the sense of urgency that a belief in the imminence of the millennium imparts to pre-millenarians.

The millenarian vision instills in the movement a sense of extreme urgency and a dedication to an all-embracing purpose. Every minute and every deed count and everything must be sacrificed to the cause. The followers are driven to stake everything and spare nothing since their aim is no less than the final solution of all human problems.¹

Although Talmon was speaking here of a movement, this description is appropriate to Annie Besant's activities in India and in relation to the Order of the Star in the East. She felt that her work in India was vital to the promotion of the evolutionary plan of the world. Her work with the Order of the Star in the East and the announcing of the coming of the World-Teacher contained this sense of urgency. In practical terms, it can be said that she felt that the millennium was imminent since the coming of the World-Teacher was imminent, even though the true millennial state would be a long time in coming. Even as an atheist and a socialist, the energy for which she worked for the collective salvation reflected this same sense of urgency although she did not write that she expected an imminent resolution of the world's problems.

An additional characteristic of pre-millenarianism in Annie Besant's thought was that for her the millennial state for which she strived was total. Besant never wrote that her millennial goal would entail an elimination of all the limitations of human life. Individuals would still have to experience death. However, for Besant the earthly manifestation of Universal Brotherhood would be a total salvation in that in this condition there would be perfect happiness

and harmony consisting of the opportunity for the individual to develop his own capacities fully in the service of others.

In the above discussion, reference has already been made to the final element in Annie Besant's thought that scholars have previously associated with pre-millenarianism, and that is messianism. Although Besant's millenarianism was non-catastrophic, she did feel that evolution had currently reached a "deadlock" and could not productively go any further without the direct intervention of a divine agent, the World-Teacher. It was the mission of the World-Teacher to deliver a message to the new sub-race and to the wider world that was to become the New Religion for the coming New Civilization. Since the mark of the New Civilization would be brotherhood, the message of the New Religion would have brotherhood as its central teaching. Here again was the recurring theme of Besant's desire to found a new religion to promote service to humanity and world brotherhood. She spoke on this topic quite often and took steps to institutionalize the new "World Religion." She felt that its main tenets would correspond to those of Theosophy which in turn she felt were the core teachings of all world religions. J. Krishnamurti as the vehicle of the World-Teacher was to deliver this teaching to the world.

Since Besant's thought combined elements that have in the past been associated by scholars with pre-millenarianism, i.e., messianism, and a sense of imminence and urgency of the total, collective, terrestrial salvation, with a belief in history that acts in a progressive, evolutionary manner, I have elected to call Besant's final pattern of ultimate concern progressive

messianism. This pattern of ultimate concern was not possible until there was a common belief in progress, which in the West dates from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.² Progressive messianism and a simple post-millennialism divorced from the mainstream of Christian thought can be found in a number of modern "New Age" groups and thinkers.

In terms of leadership patterns, Besant was an organizer-leader. She saw herself as a John the Baptist announcing the coming of the World-Teacher, or the prophet-messiah. She lectured widely on the imminent appearance of the World-Teacher, trained Krishnamurti to be his vehicle, created an organization of people who were devoted to Krishnamurti, and looked forward to the manifestation of the World-Teacher.

In addition, Besant was an ideological leader and not a charismatic leader. While her source of legitimation was her occult experiences consisting of meetings with the Lord Maitreya and other Masters on the subtler planes, these experiences were not confined to her alone. She always had these experiences in the astral company of Charles Leadbeater. Later, it was claimed that due to her intense involvement on the material plane, particularly in trying to win Home Rule for India, she lost this faculty due to disuse. Thereafter, she relied on other, secondary leaders such as Arundale and Wedgwood to keep her informed of occult events. So although this source of legitimation was not accessible to many people, it was not confined to Besant alone.

In seeking to understand why Besant's millenarianism took the form of progressive messianism, some light may be thrown on modern New Age progressive messianists. If the social problems encountered by

Besant in England and India seemed to her to be immense and overwhelming, perhaps this sense of the unsolvability of first the social problems of England, and then later those of India and the rest of the world, would lead Besant to feel the need for direct super-human intervention in the form of a messiah. Although there is no direct evidence of Besant's contact with Christian pre-millenarian thought, it was still a strong element in her cultural milieu and could have easily given shape to her later thought. As a young girl she was given to much study of the Bible and was encouraged to do so by her tutor, Miss Marryat, who was an Evangelical. Evangelicals were those Anglicans who took a literal approach to the Bible and tended to hold pre-millenarian views. Besant showed familiarity with Christian pre-millenarianism in one statement where she indicated that she found that view of history too pessimistic and went on to affirm a progressive view of history. She treated the Christian pre-millenarian view of decline in history casually as if it was a commonly held belief although incomprehensible to her. So the Christian pre-millenarian view was common in Besant's intellectual environment and could easily have influenced her own pattern of thought. The existence of this particular pattern of thought in her environment, combined with her intense concern to ameliorate suffering, as well as her assumption that suffering indeed would be eliminated eventually, could easily have led Besant to a pattern of ultimate concern that contained strong pre-millenarian elements. Since Besant retained her optimistic belief in progress, which was shared by many in the nineteenth century, the final outcome was a progressive messianism. In the second half of the twentieth century, whereas the

doctrine of progress has been severely tested by historical events, many people retain an optimistic and progressive evolutionary view of history and some of these are strongly drawn to New Age post-millennialism that emphasizes human ability to take conscious control of future human evolution with the directing aid of certain superhuman agents. While the emphasis for many New Age groups is on individual responsibility and effort, some groups have continued to look for a divine incarnation of the Christ or the Lord Maitreya. For many, a successful resolution of a world situation that is constantly threatened by nuclear holocaust will require the direct intervention of a superhuman agent. This idea is expressed explicitly in a document giving the history of the Order of the Star, an organization founded in 1982 in England, that sees its work as directly continuing the work begun by Annie Besant's Order of the Star. The first principle out of seventeen offered for consideration and affirmation states:

1. Men look for a divine intermediary when they have exhausted their own resources and the problems confronting them are beyond their solving.³

Krishnamurti as the World-Teacher

J. Krishnamurti, in claiming to be at one with the World-Teacher, fulfilled Besant's prophecy concerning the imminent appearance of the World-Teacher. As the prophet-messiah he had the opportunity to become a charismatic leader, with sole access to the source of legitimation. While not rejecting the role of the World-Teacher, he did reject the adulation and worship

that attended that role. In asserting each individual's responsibility to discover the divine within, Krishnamurti became an ideological leader. Every person could have access to the source of legitimation.

Even though Krishnamurti rejected many beliefs held by Annie Besant as being irrelevant and even impediments to spiritual progress, he fulfilled her expectations concerning the World-Teacher in several basic respects. He accepted the role of the World-Teacher and taught a message that was not based on authority, but instead emphasized the importance of each individual's ability to perceive the unity of all things. Thus his teaching was monistic, and like Besant, he believed that a desire to serve was the natural result of the monistic perception of the world.

Krishnamurti's major point of disagreement with Besant was in his absolute refusal to have anything to do with the founding of a new religion. In his mature thought, Krishnamurti taught that religious belief prevented the individual from directly experiencing reality, or "what is." Krishnamurti saw no truth whatsoever in any form of organized religion. For Krishnamurti, the truly religious person was one who was able to quiet the mental chatter so that he directly perceived and appreciated "what is" with the totality of his being.⁴

Although Besant was rather concerned with organization or the "form" of religion, as she put it, Krishnamurti and Besant were basically in agreement as to what constituted true religious life. Besant felt that the message of religion was self-sacrifice, or the giving up of self-identity, based on the knowledge of the individual's relationship to the whole. As individuals gave up selfishness or the sense of self as

being separate, the natural result would be a recognition of brotherhood. Krishnamurti shared with Besant the millennial goal of a world in which all individuals feel themselves to be brothers due to the perception of a unified whole of which all are a part. Krishnamurti agreed with the conclusion to which Besant came: that outward social reform is of no use until there is an inward change in human nature or what Krishnamurti called a "psychological revolution" in each individual. In a person who is transformed in this manner, there is the direct perception of other persons unfiltered through images, standards, and judgments imposed by the mind. Once there is the end of the sense of separateness or individual selfhood, and the person is able to perceive others directly as they are, then and only then can there be true relationship and love,⁵ or in Annie Besant's terminology, brotherhood. In this manner Krishnamurti fulfilled Besant's expectation that he as the World-Teacher and the Lord of Service would deliver a message of love and sacrifice, i.e., sacrifice of the conditioned self, which he felt would be the only salvation of the world.

Notes

¹Yonina Talmon, "Pursuit of the Millennium: The Relation Between Religious and Social Change," Archives Européennes de Sociologie 3 (1962): 132.

²Annie Besant's progressive messianism has a number of similarities with the messianists that J. L. Talmon describes in his book, Political Messianism: The Romantic Phase, (London: Secker & Warburg, 1960). Talmon discusses European socialists and nationalists such as Comte Claude de Saint-Simon, the subsequent Saint-Simonist group, Karl Marx, Mazzini, and others. The political messianists believed in the oneness of history moving toward a progressive goal entailing the fulfillment of individual freedom and self-expression within a collective whole. The political messianists, thus, were believers in progress, and were working for a collective, terrestrial, imminent, and total salvation. The process of "History" became the superhuman agent that guaranteed the imminent accomplishment of the terrestrial salvation. Examples of messianism range from the Saint-Simonists' loi vivant, Père Suprême, and the awaited Femme-Mère-Messie, to Mazzini's collective messiah of the Italian nation. In many ways, Annie Besant is the heir to the political messianists in her socialism, her Indian nationalism, and her view of the oneness of life tending toward brotherhood and unity. The significant difference relates to method: Annie Besant advocating an evolutionary and gradual method, although with imminent results, and many political messianists tending toward revolution and war.

³"The Order of the Star, Christ's Reappearance and the New Esoteric Work," The Community As Disciple Journal 1 (June 1986): 71. Michael Grosso in The Final Choice: Playing the Survival Game, (Walpole, NH: Stillpoint Publishing, 1986), links collective human transformation explicitly to the idea of the prevention of nuclear destruction of our planet. Grosso sees the development of nuclear weapons and perhaps even a brush with a global near-death experience as being a spur to the next stage in human evolution. According to Grosso, the final choice will be between survival by transformation of human consciousness and global death. Grosso terms the superhuman agent "Mind at Large," which he believes is seeking to communicate with humans through the archetypes of prophetic near-death visions, UFO contactee experiences, and visions of the Virgin

Mary. Grosso feels that when the arms race is stopped and reversed, we will know that the New Age has begun.

⁴Stuart Holroyd, The Quest of the Quiet Mind: The Philosophy of Krishnamurti (Wellingborough, England: The Aquarian Press, 1980), pp. 60-70.

⁵Ibid., pp. 73-77, 81-86.

CHAPTER IX

Epilogue

Progressive Messianism and Post-Millennialism in the New Age

The Theosophical Society today is no longer a progressive messianic movement as it tended to be when it was under the leadership of Annie Besant, but it does retain goals in keeping with a post-millennial view of history. The dissolving of the Order of the Star by Krishnamurti produced a major disturbance within the Theosophical Society during which it lost one-third of its members.¹ Today, whereas individual members of the Theosophical Society might entertain private opinions about Krishnamurti and the World-Teacher, the Theosophical Society as an organization is not specifically concerned with the expectation of a messiah-figure. Instead, the Theosophical Society focuses on its three objects while emphasizing individual freedom of thought for its members. The three objects are again given below:

1. To form a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or color.
2. To encourage the study of Comparative Religion, Philosophy and Science.
3. To investigate unexplained laws of Nature and the powers latent in man.

The first object retains the hope for the millenarian goal. This desire to promote peace and brotherhood in the world remains an active concern for Theosophists both within the Theosophical Society and within the Theosophical movement as a whole. A Special Issue of The American Theosophist, the journal of the Theosophical Society in America, published in the

Spring of 1987, devoted itself to the theme "The Necessity of Peace Within and Harmony in the World." A recent issue of the Theosophical Network, a newspaper published out of Muskogee, Oklahoma, with the goal of promoting dialogue and relations among all Theosophical groups, included articles with titles such as "What Are We Really Doing for Humanity?" "Ethics for a New Age," "H.P.B. on Fraternization and Networking," "Universal Brotherhood Among Theosophists," "Theosophical Altruism," "Human Rights (Theosophy in Practice)," and "Brotherhood."² Whereas the Theosophical Society and probably many of the related groups in the Theosophical movement can be considered post-millennialist since they are seeking a collective and terrestrial salvation achieved gradually by human effort guided by superhuman agencies, i.e., the Masters of the Wisdom, the Theosophical Society can no longer be considered a progressive messianic group since it no longer focuses on the expectation of a messiah-figure.

In the Theosophical movement, which includes individuals and groups who look to the writings of H. P. Blavatsky for their original inspiration, but who may not be affiliated with the Theosophical Society headquartered at Adyar, India, the hope for the return of the Christ or the World-Teacher has continued primarily among those who have been influenced by the writings of Alice A. Bailey.

Born Alice La Trobe Bateman (1880-1949) in Great Britain, Alice was for many years a member of the Church of England. As a young woman, she worked as a missionary to British troops in Ireland and India. Like Annie Besant, she entered into an unhappy marriage with an Episcopal priest. When the marriage ended in 1915, she found herself stranded in Monterey,

California, with three young daughters to support, which she did by working in a factory packing sardines. At that difficult juncture in her life, she met two elderly Englishwomen in Pacific Grove, California, who had been students of H. P. Blavatsky. They introduced her to the study of The Secret Doctrine. She joined the Theosophical Lodge in Pacific Grove where in addition to her studies, she taught classes of her own. The first course she taught was based on Annie Besant's A Study in Consciousness. Through Theosophy, Alice discovered that there was a divine plan and that the head of "Those Who are responsible for the working out of that Plan" was the Christ.

I learnt that when I, in my orthodox days, talked about Christ and His Church I was really speaking of Christ and the planetary Hierarchy. I found that the esoteric presentation of truth in no way belittled Christ. He was, indeed, the Son of God, the First Born in a great family of brothers, as St. Paul has told us, and a guarantee to us of our own divinity.³

In 1917 Alice moved her family to Hollywood to live at Krotona, then the headquarters of the Theosophical Society in America and also the headquarters of the American branch of the Esoteric Section. There she was given the job of running the cafeteria. In 1918 she was admitted into the Esoteric Section. In the shrine room of the Esoteric Section she saw a picture of the Master K.H., whom she recognized at once as the turbaned man who had mysteriously visited her at age fifteen. She was rebuked by an older E.S. member for asserting that she was a disciple of K.H.⁴

In 1919, Alice met her future husband, Foster Bailey. During that year, Foster Bailey became secretary of the Theosophical Society in America and Alice was editor of the sectional magazine, The Messenger, and chairperson of the committee that ran Krotona. Alice and Foster were critical of the Besant administration, considering it "reactionary and old-fashioned." They were critical of the policy requiring a two year membership in the Theosophical Society before admission into the Esoteric Section. They were critical of the policy requiring all E.S. members to sever their connection with other organizations and to pledge loyalty to Annie Besant as the Outer Head of the E.S. Alice recounted that she was astounded at the statement of the secretary of the E.S. "that no one in the world could be a disciple of the Masters of the Wisdom unless they had been so notified by Mrs. Besant." Alice, feeling that she had long been a disciple of K.H., did not believe that she had to have prior approval from Annie Besant. Alice and Foster saw the Besant administration as an autocratic regime controlling the Theosophical Society through the agency of the E.S. Alice later accused Leadbeater of false psychical claims and "extraordinary control over Mrs. Besant."⁵ While being extremely critical of Annie Besant's administration, Alice Bailey in her Unfinished Autobiography stated that:

The indebtedness of the world to Mrs. Besant for the work that she did in making the basic tenets of the T.S. teaching available to the masses of men in every country, is something that can never be repaid. There is absolutely no reason why we should overlook the stupendous, magnificent work she did for the

Masters and for humanity. Those who have during the past five years so violently attacked her seem to me of no more importance than fleas attacking an elephant.⁶

In 1920 when L. W. Rogers became National President of the Theosophical Society in America, he removed Foster Bailey and Alice Evans (later Bailey) from their positions and asked them to leave Krotona. Alice reported that prior to that time, in November 1919, she had been contacted through mental telepathy by the Master D.K., "the Tibetan," who asked her to be his amanuensis in the writing of his books. Alice reported that she immediately responded, "I'm not a darned psychic and I won't be drawn into anything like that."⁷ Reluctantly, she agreed to a trial period and began to work with D.K. after she was assured by him and her own Master, K.H., that she would not be functioning as an unconscious medium. Alice and Foster Bailey devoted themselves to this work after their departure from the Theosophical Society. It was claimed that D.K. communicated with Alice Bailey by clairaudience, mental telepathy, out of the body experiences while asleep, and by presenting symbols and manuscripts for Alice's clairvoyant vision. During thirty years of work, eighteen books were published, purporting to have been written by the Tibetan, and six books were said to have been written by Alice Bailey, herself. In 1923, the Baileys founded the Arcane School to train disciples for the Masters and which the Baileys hoped would be an improvement over the Esoteric Section.⁸

The teachings found in the Alice Bailey books are an elaboration of Annie Besant's teachings concerning the coming of the New Civilization and the World-

Teacher. The Alice Bailey works, however, use terminology that has become commonplace in the 1980's, i.e., reference is made to the "New Age," and, denoting a heavy reliance on astrology, "The Age of Aquarius."

The Alice Bailey teachings can be seen as following the progressive messianic pattern. History is seen as an evolutionary process that is progressing slowly according to a divine plan. Ultimately, there will be a collective and terrestrial salvation that will be characterized by the activation of the buddhic faculty or Christ consciousness in human beings. Thus the "fallacy of separatism" will come to an end and there will be a condition of perfect brotherhood on earth. Disease will not suddenly disappear, but physicians will be better able to render their services since they will have clairvoyant faculties. Since there will be a continuity of consciousness between the physical and astral planes, "death will be finally seen to be non-existent in the sense in which it is now understood." The change in consciousness in human beings will also have an effect in the mineral, plant and animal kingdoms. The Alice Bailey writings, as did Annie Besant, take a view of evolution that includes vast periods of time and recognize that the Sixth Root Race will be a long time in developing. However, a sense of the imminence of the New Age is promoted by the expectation of the imminent appearance of the Bodhisattva, the Avatar, or the Christ, as the messiah is variously termed in the Alice Bailey writings. His appearance at the close of this century will bring about peace on earth. Human effort can hasten the coming of the Christ by working for peace in the world and by preparing the world for Christ's appearance.⁹

Your spiritual goal is the establishing of the Kingdom of God. One of the first steps toward this is to prepare men's minds to accept the fact that the reappearance of the Christ is imminent. You must tell men everywhere that the Masters and Their Groups of disciples are actively working to bring order out of chaos. You must tell them that there IS a Plan, and that nothing can possibly arrest the working out of that Plan. You must tell them that the Hierarchy stands, and that It has stood for thousands of years, and is the expression of the accumulated Wisdom of the Ages. You must tell them above ALL else that God is Love, that the Hierarchy is Love, and that Christ is coming because He loves humanity.¹⁰

According to the Alice Bailey material, one important way that individuals can hasten the coming of the Christ is to use The Great Invocation. The Great Invocation will evoke a response from the Christ by his appearance, as it "constitutes a call which He may not deny and one which He must obey."¹¹ The Great Invocation is given below:

From the point of Light within the Mind of God
 Let light stream forth into the minds of men.
 Let Light descend on Earth.

From the point of Love within the Heart of God
 Let love stream forth into the hearts of men.
 May Christ return to Earth.

From the center where the Will of God is known
 Let purpose guide the little wills of men--
 The purpose which the Masters know and serve.
 From the center which we call the race of men

Let the Plan of Love and Light work out
 And may it seal the door where evil dwells.
 Let Light and Love and Power restore the Plan on
 Earth.

The Great Invocation has been distributed to the public by a great many different agencies and individuals, some directly connected to the Alice Bailey work and some not. A sampling of the agencies distributing The Great Invocation include World Goodwill headquartered in the United Nations Plaza in New York City, London and Geneva; the School for Esoteric Studies in New York City; The Order of the Star based in Essex, England; Meditation Group for the New Age in Ojai, California; Meditation Magazine; and even the Reiki Association of America has printed The Great Invocation on the back of a card which lists the Reiki Principles. The Alice Bailey organizations promote the annual observance of a World Invocation Day, whose date is determined by the lunar calendar, and is two months after Easter and one month after the Buddhist festival of Wesak (the full moon of May).¹²

The Alice Bailey material states that the Christ will appear in one of three ways or perhaps in all three at once. These are:

1. The "overshadowing" of initiates and disciples by "influencing their minds telepathically."

2. "By the pouring out of the Christ life or consciousness upon the masses everywhere and in every nation." This will prepare the masses of humanity to be responsive to Christ's message.

3. "By His physical appearance among men."¹³

The Alice Bailey writings teach that when the Christ returns he will bring with him some angels and Masters.¹⁴ The process of the Masters beginning to

work openly in the world is known as "the externalization of the Hierarchy," which is the title of one of the Alice Bailey books.

An important theme in the Alice Bailey works, as in the thought of Annie Besant, is the formation of a new world religion. As the use of The Great Invocation and the Full Moon Meditations of the Alice Bailey groups indicate, it is believed that the "new religion will be one of Invocation and Evocation, of bringing together great spiritual energies and then stepping them down for the benefiting and the stimulation of the masses."¹⁵ In a book entitled Toward a World Religion for the New Age, Lola Davis argues for the need for a new world religion that will synthesize the best elements of the existing world religions with the current findings of science, and promote brotherhood and peace in the world. She suggests an organizational structure similar to the United Nations that will promote unity while preserving individual differences among religions. She feels

. . . the One for whom all religions wait, called Lord Maitreya by some in the East, Krishna, Messiah, Bodhisattva, Christ, Imam Mahdi, will bring new revelations and further guidance for establishing the World Religion.¹⁶

Lola Davis, like Annie Besant and Alice A. Bailey before her, had her origins in Christianity, in this case "a fundamentalist Christian church," and had married a minister. She and her husband served as missionaries in Assam where she came into contact with "Hindus, Moslems, Animists and Christians." Returning to the United States, she earned a B.A. in sociology, an M.S. in guidance education, and finally a Ph.D. in

education from Northwestern University in Evanston. Divorced from her husband in 1950, she worked for many years in California. She has used study materials from the Meditation Group for the New Age ("Meditation Mount") in Ojai, California, founded by Dr. Roberto Assagioli based on the Alice Bailey works. Despite the Ojai connection, Davis' book seems inspired entirely by the Alice Bailey materials and by Davis' own study of science and the world religions, and not by Annie Besant's teachings.¹⁷ If the principle of revelation from D.K., the Tibetan, is not accepted, it could be said that Besant's works influenced Davis indirectly through the writings of Alice Bailey. The Bailey writings and Davis' book are recapitulations of the themes found in Besant's thought.

Another person inspired by the Alice Bailey writings is an Englishman, Benjamin Creme, who feels he is in touch with Maitreya the Christ through the process of "overshadowing," telepathetic communication where no trance or loss of consciousness is involved. Creme acknowledges that it is embarrassing to claim to be speaking for the Christ, but he feels these communications will help lead humanity into the Aquarian Age. Creme feels that Krishnamurti was just one of a group of people prepared to be a vehicle for Maitreya, but that Krishnamurti rejected this role. Creme does feel that Krishnamurti's teachings have helped to prepare the world for the coming of Maitreya himself in a Mayavirupa body that he has created by an act of will. Creme reports that on July 7, 1977, Maitreya left his Body of Light at rest in the Himalayas and donned his Mayavirupa body. On July 8, 1977, Maitreya travelled by airplane from the Himalayas to an Indian city, thus fulfilling the prophecy of the Christ "coming in the

clouds." By July 19, 1977, he had travelled to a "certain modern country" by airplane where he now makes his home and is a respected member of his community. In 1986 Creme revealed that Maitreya is living in the East End of London as a member of the Pakistani-Indian community. Creme states that Maitreya the Christ will not reveal himself publically at first, but that people will gradually become aware of a great teacher in their midst and then these people will "go into the world and spread abroad the fact that the Christ is in the world" From the beginning of September 1977, Creme has been delivering Maitreya's messages publically through the "overshadowing" technique. Creme asserts that the energies of Maitreya can be felt by witnesses to the overshadowing process and that some witnesses can see the overshadowing clairvoyantly. Creme believes that the Christ has returned "to complete the task He began in Palestine. . . ." Creme looks forward to a modern Pentecost event, or a Day of Declaration, when the Christ will be seen all over the world on television, but he will communicate with the peoples of the world telepathically in their own languages. This event will inaugurate the "Age of Love." Creme believes that the celebration of this modern-day Pentecost will be a major holiday in the New World Religion.¹⁸

There is a progressive messianic movement headquartered in Essex, England, that consciously relates itself to the work of Annie Besant as well as the teachings of Alice Bailey. A history given of the present Order of the Star states that although Krishnamurti dissolved the Order in 1929, it continued to work "behind the scenes." In 1982, the Order began to work publically again under the name Lodge of the

Star under the leadership of Steven Barron and Robert Adams. In January 1985, the organization took the name, Order of the Star. The modern Order of the Star traces its origins back to the founding of the Theosophical Society in 1875 by H. P. Blavatsky, the work done by Annie Besant in relation to Krishnamurti as the World-Teacher, and the Alice Bailey writings. It is felt that when Krishnamurti dissolved the prior Order of the Star, the World-Teacher withdrew his influence from Krishnamurti. The Tibetan is cited as explaining that the experiment with Krishnamurti was brought to an end because of the highly emotional reaction of the people around Krishnamurti to the World-Teacher's presence. This apparently was not the desired reaction, but the writer of the history of the Order of the Star acknowledges that the "true reasons for the conclusion of this phase remain esoteric and generally unknown. . . ."19

Members of the Order of the Star believe that their work is guided by the Master K.H., who contacts Steven Barron by mental telepathy. The Order of the Star is not preparing someone to be the physical vehicle for the Lord Maitreya as was the case with Krishnamurti. Instead, they hope to build up meditation Groups of Twelve, consisting of members all over the world who will link up in their private meditations. A thirteenth member will function to channel the response from the "Centre of Shamballa." Presently, the Order is focusing on coordinating the efforts of Triangles, where three people "link together subjectively and physically where possible once a week and during the time of the full-moon." Eventually, four Triangles will be put together to form the Groups of Twelve, who will build "an energy bridge for the

Christ" and "thus make way for a greater descent of the Christ Consciousness and the World Teacher Himself."²⁰ The Groups of Twelve "form a vehicle for the Christ . . . they become a group Christ, an agency of the reappearance."²¹ While members of the Order of the Star believe that London will be a major receiving center for these divine energies, the Order of the Star has no connection with the work of Benjamin Creme and its members do not believe that the Christ is living in London.²²

The Order of the Star currently has 400 members worldwide, with members in Great Britain, the United States, Belgium, Switzerland, Yugoslavia, Germany, Canada, Chile, Spain, and contacts in several other countries. The first Star Gathering was held in London in 1986 and attracted 50 people from several countries. The second Star Gathering was held in Albany, New York, in July 1987, and 40 people attended. The Order is actively pursuing the possibility of linking its members by means of a computer network as well as by meditation.²³

The Order of the Star is a progressive messianic movement in that it combines a progressive view of history, with a hope for a total, collective, terrestrial salvation that will be accomplished by the imminent appearance of a messiah, the Christ. The members of the Order of the Star believe that progressive evolution is guided by the superhuman agents of the Masters of the Hierarchy, headed by the Christ, as well as influenced by astrological energies. It is believed that currently the earth is being influenced by the planet Jupiter which "is the sign of the coming Messiah." The Groups of Twelve that are being built will function as a group Christ, but the Order's pur-

pose is to work for "the Reappearance of the Christ," who it is said, decided to return in 1945 when he gave the world The Great Invocation. Christ's coming will bring about the kingdom of God on earth, the Aquarian Age. Dates are not being set, and one gets the sense from reading the Order's literature that building up the Triangles and then the Groups of Twelve is slow and hard work. However, a respondent to a questionnaire sent to the Triangle participants expressed the sense of imminence by saying, "I feel that inner happiness and will to proceed and somehow at moments, I feel how the Great Change is waiting just around the corner."²⁴

In the 1980's the hope for a New Age has become widespread among diverse individuals and groups. Not all of them are progressive messianists as was Annie Besant and some of her successors in the Theosophical movement. Many of them may be considered New Age post-millennialists in that they are expecting a collective and terrestrial salvation accomplished gradually under the impelling guidance of a superhuman agency.

Marilyn Ferguson, a journalist who publishes a bi-weekly research/report, the Brain/Mind Bulletin, and is the author of The Brain Revolution, in her 1980 book, The Aquarian Conspiracy, points to what she and many others feel is an impending shift in world view, or a paradigm shift on a world-wide basis. Ferguson feels that the social activism of the 1960's and the "consciousness revolution" of the 1970's seems "to be moving toward a historic synthesis: social transformation resulting from personal transformation--change from the inside out."²⁵ Ferguson dubs this movement the "Aquarian Conspiracy," referring to the hope for the New Age or Age of Aquarius, and conspiracy in its sense of "to breathe together," an intimate joining together

in a benevolent sense to transform the world.²⁶ To use a term that has become popular in the 1980's, the believers in the coming New Age are "networking" and thus have become Aquarian Conspirators. Ferguson believes that the Aquarian Conspiracy is not a counter-culture, "but an emergent culture--the coalescence of a new social order."²⁷

Ferguson does not look to Theosophy per se as portending the Aquarian Age, but the respondents to her Aquarian Conspiracy survey listed the following persons in the order of their influence as having most influenced their ideas: Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, C. G. Jung, Abraham Maslow, Carl Rogers, Aldous Huxley, Roberto Assagioli, and J. Krishnamurti.²⁸ In addition to Krishnamurti being mentioned, and his friend Aldous Huxley, Dr. Roberto Assagioli founded the Meditation Group for the New Age in Ojai, based on the Alice Bailey materials. Ferguson believes that all of the world's problems can be attributed to the old paradigm, which is isolationist and separatist and assumes that that problems such as hunger and war can never be solved. The new Aquarian paradigm will create a "New World," a world in which all persons and nations are seen as interdependent, and there will be global communication and trust. Once there is this personal shift in consciousness of individuals, a warless society can appear.²⁹ The new paradigm will affect views on politics, economics, sexuality and marriage, child-rearing, education--in short, the transformation will be total. The shift to the new paradigm is being effected by individuals and small groups who share the common viewpoint and who network together using modern means of communication. Like Annie Besant, Ferguson sees the new society as emerging primarily from

California with its blend of eastern and western thought. Ferguson quotes Jacob Needleman's comment on California: "Something is struggling to be born here."³⁰

Ferguson accepts an evolutionary view of history, but citing new scientific observations, she feels that evolution is punctuated by sudden leaps by small groups to produce new species. She quotes Harvard biologist and sociologist, Steven Jay Gould, as saying "change occurs in large leaps following a slow accumulation of stresses. . . ."³¹ Similarly, Ferguson is suggesting that we may be on the brink of evolving a new human type that is able to see that the sense of a separate self is illusory and can comprehend unity with the earth and all other human beings.³² In other words, the goal is identical to Annie Besant's millenarian goal of "Brotherhood."

At first, the superhuman agent is not apparent in Ferguson's book. There is no reference to the Logos or the Masters of Wisdom as in Theosophy. But her chapter reviewing the reports of various mystical experiences entitled "Spiritual Adventure: Connection to the Source" strongly suggests a belief in an encompassing whole which is alive and conscious, and seems to have a purpose, which can be termed "God."

God is experienced as flow, wholeness, the infinite kaleidoscope of life and death, ultimate Cause, the ground of being . . . God is the consciousness that manifests as lila, the play of the universe. God is the organizing matrix we can experience but not tell, that which enlivens matter.³³

The work of Dr. Jean Houston may be taken as one more example of New Age post-millennialism. In her

book, The Possible Human, Houston refers to the "Rhythm of Awakening," some force or energy in history that is impelling people to push forward to a new stage in human evolution. This would seem to be her superhuman agency. This Rhythm warns us that the problems of the world "are rooted in our inadequate use of our humanity" ³⁴ Thus, Jean Houston and her husband, Robert Masters, have explored ways of expanding human consciousness and human potential through their work with the Foundation for Mind Research in Pomona, New York. Houston optimistically sees human evolution as entering into a new phase. Houston finds evidence for this in persons that she calls "people of the break-through." These are people from all walks of life "who take the time to prepare themselves so that they can listen to the rhythms of awakening that may be pulsing from a deeper, more coherent Order of Reality." Houston expresses a sense of the imminence of the New Age when she writes, "I see a change. And you are part of it." ³⁵

Finally, no discussion of New Age post-millennialism and progressive messianism would be complete without reference to the international festival celebrated August 16-17, 1987, known as the Harmonic Convergence. The Harmonic Convergence was the brainchild of Dr. José Arguëlles, artist and art historian. Drawing on his study of the Mayan astronomy and prophecies, as well as the prophecies of Native American tribes such as the Hopi, Lakota, and Ute, Arguëlles was able to generate international publicity about the dawning of the New Age on August 16-17, 1987, if 144,000 people would gather at sacred sites around the world "to create a resonating link between Universal Energies and the Earth." ³⁶ Precedents seen as

preparatory for the Harmonic Convergence were: Earth Day, March 21, 1970; The First Planetary Congress, June 1983; World War IV, August 5, 1984; Live Aid, July 13, 1985; The Great Peace March, March-November 1986; The Good-Will Games, Summer 1986; The First Earth Run, September 16-October 16, 1986; and the World Healing Day--Instant of Cooperation--Global Meditation, December 31, 1986.³⁷ Whereas the South and North American Indian peoples on whose mythologies the celebration was based had cyclical views of history with golden ages succeeding steadily declining dark ages, Arguëlles adapts these mythologies to fit with a belief in progressive evolution, stating that the Harmonic Convergence was "the path to the full attainment of our evolutionary destiny."³⁸ Arguëlles sees humanity as an evolving organism contained within an evolving planetary organism, which in turn is contained within an evolving galactic organism. Arguëlles sees human evolution as consisting of five stages.

The first phase is nature presents itself, the second is man learns from nature. The third phase, man transforms nature, refers to the cycle of civilization which began around 3000-3100 B.C., by the Mayan calendar, and continues up to the present moment. We are now entering the fourth phase which is very brief, nature evaluates man's transformation. This evaluation of man's transformation is nature evaluating history, civilization as it has come to be. Many native American prophetic traditions refer to this fourth phase as the "stage of purification." According to the Mayan calendar harmonics, this phase will last between 1987-1992. At

that point, we will enter the fifth phase, which is man and nature synthesize. We will understand that we cannot operate under the belief that we are separate from or superior to nature, but that we are part of a large, symbiotic relationship with the total planetary environment.³⁹

While critical of "the myth of endless material progress which has brought us nuclear war and environmental degradation," Arguëlles is actually proposing a new concept of progress, "a new myth, that of a global village of planetary synchronization and cooperation ruled by the arts of peace."⁴⁰ The synchronization refers to the component of human effort, because Arguëlles asserted there had to be a critical number of humans (144,000) who surrendered to the available planetary and galactic energies during the days of the Harmonic Convergence in order to cause the shift of humanity as a whole into the next stage.

The superhuman agencies take on a galactic scope in the thought of Arguëlles. The Mayan term, Hunab Ku, is used to denote the galactic core, which is the heart and guiding intelligence of our galaxy. Arguëlles postulates a galactic beam emanating from Hunab Ku and mediated through the Sun, that has been stimulating evolution on Earth. The Earth entered into this beam August 13, 3113 B.C. and will emerge from the beam in 2012 A.D. Arguëlles sees the Classic Maya as galactic masters whose task was to record the vibrations of the beam and make sure that it had been received by the Earth. Once their job was complete in 810 A.D., they "beamed up" in galactic cocoons. In 2012, a great cycle of human evolution will be complete, and humanity will embark on a new phase that will entail membership

in the Galactic Federation. At that time, "we shall recognize ourselves as human no more."⁴¹

Messianism was a part of the Harmonic Convergence in that "the Mexican avatar Quetzalcoatl" was expected in some sense to return.⁴² The exact method of his return was left ambiguous. His spirit was to be reborn in the hearts of all humans on August 16-17, 1987, but Quetzalcoatl was also clearly identified as a specific divine human incarnation. Brooke Medicine Eagle explained that Quetzalcoatl was a "copper-haired, blue-eyed master who taught the way of Love, could stop the winds and walk on water, heal the sick and raise the dead."⁴³ Karen Kos wrote:

According to the ancient wisdom, contained in myth, prophecy, legend and other lore, this year will see the return of an archetypal divine energy--a being called Quetzalcoatl by the Aztecs and Toltecs, Kukulcan and Gucamatz by the Mayas, Poha'na by the Hopis, and Jesus Christ by the Christians--that will propel the Earth into a new cycle of healing, rebuilding, cooperation and refocusing.⁴⁴

Arguëlles identified Quetzalcoatl with two avatars, Pacal Votan of Palenque (631-683 A.D) and 1 Reed Quetzalcoatl (947-999 A.D.) To the extent that there was an expectation of a divine human messiah, the Harmonic Convergence can be said to be an example of progressive messianism. The Harmonic Convergence has left the way open for an individual in the future to proclaim himself as the predicted Quetzalcoatl who will lead humanity into the New Age.

According to Arguëlles, the Harmonic Convergence was crucial for the dawning of the New Age. It eliminated the possibility of Armageddon and was an impetus

to the possibility of a New Heaven and a New Earth.⁴⁵ By 1992, after the five year stage of transition, "it will be evident that a new era has dawned. . . ." ⁴⁶ Thus, the Harmonic Convergence promoted a sense of the imminence of the New Age which by 1992 will consist of a "de-industrialized, de-centralized, post-military planetary society. . . ." ⁴⁷ Arguëlles foresaw that immediately after the Harmonic Convergence in 1987, the organization of a World Peace Congress would oversee the process of demilitarization, education, and restoration of the environment. For Arguëlles, the New Age will be a total, terrestrial, and collective salvation in that all nuclear arms as well as nuclear plants will be dismantled, work will be done to restore the environment and harmonize humanity to the Earth's vibrations, present political structures will be replaced with "vast numbers of bioregional local cells," information will be presented as "edu-tainment," new technologies will be developed and workers re-educated.⁴⁸

José Arguëlles does not acknowledge any direct intellectual debt to Theosophy, but his writings show that he is familiar with the Theosophical movement and its teachings. While Arguëlles based his predictions about the Harmonic Convergence on Mayan and North American Indian prophecies, his interviewer in Meditation Magazine explicitly related Arguëlles' views to the teachings of D.K. the Tibetan. Arguëlles acknowledged that the two views are the same, at least in reference to the solar system being part of a Cosmic Being, but did not express any indebtedness to the Alice Bailey writings. However, the editors of Meditation Magazine felt it was appropriate to insert The Great Invocation amidst the text of the interview with Arguëlles. In The Mayan Factor, Arguëlles refers

to the significance of the teachings of H. P. Blavatsky during a period of time he terms the Katun 13, lasting from 1874 to 1894, and he refers to the old Theosophical theme of "Shambala" as the headquarters of the Hierarchy by saying that Shambala is an interdimensional realm inhabited by Lords of the Sun who brought the evolutionary seed-pack to Earth 26,000 years ago.⁴⁹

Progressive messianism and New Age post-millennialism are very much alive and well in the 1980's, and the hope for the New Age will probably increase as we move into the next millennium.

Notes

¹Bruce F. Campbell, Ancient Wisdom Revived: A History of the Theosophical Movement, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), p. 130. Campbell reports that prior to the dissolving of the Order of the Star, the membership of the Theosophical Society peaked at approximately 45,000. The Order of the Star of the East had 30,000 members. In 1980, the Theosophical Society had approximately 35,000 members worldwide, with 9,000 in India, and 5,500 in the United States.

²Dora Kunz, Executive Editor, and William Metzger, Managing Editor, The American Theosophist, Special Issue, "The Necessity of Peace Within and Harmony in the World," 75 (May 1987); Theosophical Network, Summer 1987.

³Alice A. Bailey, The Unfinished Autobiography of Alice A. Bailey, (New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1951), pp. 139-40.

⁴Ibid., pp. 144, 152, 155.

⁵Ibid., pp. 155-58, 170-71.

⁶Ibid., p. 172.

⁷Ibid., pp. 163.

⁸Ibid., pp. 259-61, 193, 195-98; Reference Index in Ponder on This, (New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1971).

⁹The Prophecies of the Tibetan, Djwhal Khul, (Tucson: The Universarium Foundation, Inc., 1983), pp. iii, vi, 1-2, 74, 87, 93-94, 100, 125, 129, 147.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 168.

¹¹Ibid., p. 19.

¹²"World Invocation Day," pamphlet distributed by World Goodwill, 866 United Nations Plaza, Suite 566-7, New York, New York 10017-1888.

¹³The Prophecies of the Tibetan, p. 16.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 81.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 46

¹⁶Lola Davis, "Synopsis of Toward a World Religion for the New Age," in Science, Religions and The Ageless Wisdom Point Toward a World Religion for the New Age, (Farmington, NY: Coleman Publishing, 1983), n.p.

¹⁷"About the Author" on the back of Toward a World Religion for the New Age, and "Appreciation" in Toward a World Religion for the New Age, n.p.

¹⁸Benjamin Creme, The Reappearance of the Christ and the Masters of Wisdom, (London: The Tara Press, 1980, pp. 20-23, 37, 42, 53-55, 203. See also Benjamin Creme, Messages from Maitreya the Christ, Vol. One, One Hundred Messages, (London: Tara Press, 1980), and Benjamin Creme, Maitreya's Mission, (Amsterdam: Share International Foundation, 1986).

¹⁹"The Order of the Star, Christ's Reappearance and the New Esoteric Work," The Community As Disciple Journal 1 (June 1986): 3, 8, 9-11.

²⁰Letter to author from Robert Adams dated July 15, 1987.

²¹"The Order of the Star, Christ's Reappearance and the New Esoteric Work," pp. 20-21.

²²Letter to author from Robert Adams dated October 12, 1987.

²³Letter from Robert Adams dated July 15, 1987; Letter from Robert Adams dated October 12, 1987; "Computer Project," International Star News 12 (October 1986).

²⁴"The Order of the Star, Christ's Reappearance and the New Esoteric Work," pp. 7, 19-20; "Questionnaire Comments," International Star News 14 (May 1987).

²⁵Marilyn Ferguson, The Aquarian Conspiracy: Personal and Social Transformation in the 1980s, (Los Angeles: J. P. Tarcher, Inc., 1980), p. 18.

²⁶Ibid., p. 19.

²⁷Ibid., p. 38.

²⁸Ibid., p. 420.

²⁹Ibid., p. 408.

³⁰Ibid., p. 140.

³¹Ibid., p. 160.

³²Ibid., p. 100.

³³Ibid., p. 382.

³⁴Jean Houston, The Possible Human: A Course in Extending Your Physical, Mental, and Creative Abilities, (Los Angeles: J. P. Tarcher, 1982), p. xv.

³⁵Ibid., p. 214.

³⁶"Harmonic Convergence: World Harmony Days August 16-17, 1987," publicity brochure distributed by Global Family/Harmonic Convergence, P. O. Box 6111, Boulder, Colorado 80306.

³⁷José Arguëlles, "Harmonic Convergence; Trigger-Event: Implementation and Follow-up," publicity brochure distributed by Planet Art Network, Boulder, Colorado, p. 1.

³⁸Ibid., p. 8.

³⁹Interview with José Arguëlles, Meditation Magazine, Summer 1987: 8.

⁴⁰Arguëlles, "Harmonic Convergence," p. 3.

⁴¹José Arguëlles, The Mayan Factor: The Path Beyond Technology, (Santa Fe: Bear & Company, 1987), p. 128.

⁴²Interview with José Arguëlles, p. 10.

⁴³Brooke Medicine Eagle, "The Turning of the Age," promotional flyer for the Harmonic Convergence, source unknown.

⁴⁴Karen Kos, "Harmonic Convergence: The Prophecies," promotional flyer distributed by Planet Art Network, Boulder, Colorado.

⁴⁵Arguëlles, The Mayan Factor, p. 148.

⁴⁶Arguëlles, "Harmonic Convergence," p. 7.

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹Arguëlles, The Mayan Factor, pp. 142, 176.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adams, R.
1987a Letter to author, July 15.
- 1987b Letter to author, October 12.
- Alcyone
[J. Krishnamurti] At the Feet of the Master, 1st
1911 American ed. Chicago: The Rajput
Press.
- Anonymous
1986 Computer Project. International
Star News 12 (October).
- Anonymous
N.d. The Happy Valley Association. N.p.
- Anonymous
N.d. Harmonic Convergence: World Harmony
Days August 16-17, 1987. Global
Family/Harmonic Convergence, P. O.
Box 6111, Boulder, Colorado 80306.
Brochure.
- Anonymous
1987 Interview with José Argüelles.
Meditation Magazine, Summer.
- Anonymous
1986 The Order of the Star, Christ's
Reappearance and the New Esoteric
Work. The Community As Disciple
Journal 1 (June): 5-16.
- Anonymous,
compiler Ponder on This. New York: Lucis
1971 Publishing Company.
- Anonymous,
compiler The Prophecies of the Tibetan,
1983 Djwhal Khul. Tucson: The
Universariun Foundation, Inc.
- Anonymous
1987 Questionnaire Comments. Inter-
national Star News 14 (May).

Anonymous
1925

The Theosophical Movement
1975-1925: A History and a Survey.
New York: E. P. Dutton & Company.

Anonymous
N.d.

World Invocation Day. World
Goodwill, 866 United Nations Plaza,
Suite 566-7, New York, NY 10017-
1888. Pamphlet.

Argüelles, J.
1987

The Mayan Factor: The Path Beyond
Technology. Santa Fe: Bear &
Company.

Argüelles, J.
N.d.

Harmonic Convergence, Trigger-
Event: Implementation and Follow-
Up. Planet Art Network, Boulder,
Colorado. Publicity brochure.

Ashley, M.
1982

The People of England: A Short
Social and Economic History.
London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson.

Bailey, A.
1951

The Unfinished Autobiography of
Alice A. Bailey. New York: Lucis
Publishing Company.

Baird, R. D.
1971

Category Formation and the History
of Religions. The Hague: Mouton.

Barker, A. T.
trans. and comp.
1923

The Mahatma Letters to A. P.
Sinnett from the Mahatmas M. & K.H.
London: T. Fisher Unwin Ltd.

Besant, A.
1877a

The Gospel of Atheism: A Lecture.
London: Freethought Publishing
Company.

1877b

My Path to Atheism. London:
Freethought Publishing Company.

- 1883a A Christian Legend. Our Corner 1
(March): 183-85.
- 1883b A Greek Legend. Our Corner 1
(February): 119-22.
- 1883c A Hindu Legend. Our Corner 1
(January): 55-58.
- 1883d A Hindu Legend. Our Corner 1
(April): 247-49.
- 1883e A Jewish Legend. Our Corner 1
(May): 310-12.
- 1883f Two Legends. Our Corner 2 (July):
54-57.
- 1883g Two Legends. Our Corner 2 (August):
118-21.
- 1885a Autobiographical Sketches. London:
Freethought Publishing Company.
- 1885b Edinburgh Slums. Our Corner 6
(December): 334-40.
- 1885c A World Without God: A Reply to
Miss Frances Power Cobbe. London:
Freethought Publishing Company.
- 1886 Life, Death, and Immortality.
London: Freethought Publishing
Company.
- 1887 Why I Do Not Believe in God.
London: Freethought Publishing
Company.
- 1888 The Army of the Commonweal. Our
Corner 11 (February): 115-21.
- 1891 The Law of Population: Its Conse-
quences, and Its Bearing upon Human
Conduct and Morals. London:
Freethought Publishing Company.
- 1895a The Masters as Facts and Ideals.
London: Theosophical Publishing
Society.

- 1895b Theosophical Essays. London: The Theosophical Publishing House.
- 1903 The Laws of the Higher Life: Being Lectures delivered at an Annual Convention of the Indian Section of the Theosophical Society, held at Varanasi (Benares). Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House.
- 1907a Address of the President of the T.S. To the Convention of the American Section. September, 1907. The Theosophist 29 (October): 7-17.
- 1907b The Wisdom of the Upanishads: Four Convention Lectures delivered at the Thirty-first Anniversary of The Theosophical Society at Adyar, December, 1906. 1st ed. Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House.
- 1908a Annie Besant: An Autobiography. London: T. Fisher Unwin.
- 1908b An Introduction to Yoga. 1st ed. Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House.
- 1909a Evolution of Life and Form: Four Lectures delivered at the Twenty-third Anniversary Meeting of the Theosophical Society at Adyar, Madras, 1898. 3d ed. London: Theosophical Publishing House.
- 1909b The Religious Problem in India: Four Lectures delivered during the Twenty-sixth annual Convention of the Theosophical Society at Adyar, Madras, 1901. 2d ed. Adyar, Madras: The "Theosophist" Office.
- 1909c The Theosophic Life. The Theosophist 30 (March): 517-26.
- 1910 The Brotherhood of Religions. The Theosophist 32 (October): 19-28; 32

(November): 185-89; 32 (December): 327-40.

- 1911 The Riddle of Life, and How Theosophy Answers It. London: Theosophical Publishing Society.
- 1912a Aspects of the Christ: A Lecture to the Convention of England and Wales. The Theosophist 34 (November): 179-98.
- 1912b The Growth of the T.S. The Theosophist 33 (July): 497-510.
- 1912c The New Continent. The Theosophist 33 (July): 513.
- 1912d The Self and Its Sheaths. Adyar, Madras: The "Theosophist" Office.
- 1913a Is Belief in the Masters Superstitious or Harmful? The Theosophist 35 (December): 335-60.
- 1913b Man's Life in This and Other Worlds. Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House.
- 1913c Saviours of the World, or World-Teachers. The Theosophist 34 (September): 833-55.
- 1913d Wake Up, India: A Plea for Social Reform. Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House.
- 1913e A World-Religion. The Adyar Bulletin 6 (December): 491-97.
- 1914a Death--and After. London: Theosophical Publishing Society.
- 1914b Ideals of the Future. The Herald of the Star 3 (February): 68-69.
- 1914c Why We Believe in the Coming of a World Teacher. The Herald of the Star 3 (July): 390-95; 3 (August): 461-65.

- 1916 The Wider Outlook. The Theosophist
38 (November): 127-40.
- 1917a The Birth of New India. Adyar,
Madras: The Theosophical Publishing
House.
- 1917b Duties of the Theosophist. Adyar,
Madras: The Theosophical Publishing
House.
- 1917c India: A Nation. rev. ed. London:
Home Rule for India League.
- 1919a The Light of the Star. The Herald
of the Star 8 (October): 471-77.
- 1919b Psychology. Hollywood: The
Theosophical Publishing House.
- 1919c Superhuman Men in History and in
Religion. Hollywood: The
Theosophical Publishing House.
- 1920 Lectures on Political Science.
2d ed. Adyar, Madras: The
Commonweal Office.
- 1921a The Great Plan. Adyar, Madras: The
Theosophical Publishing House.
- 1921b Some Questions Concerning the Order
of the Star in the East. The Herald
of the Star 10 (August): 232.
- 1922a Britain and India. The Theosophist
43 (January): 317-31.
- 1922b The Future of Indian Politics.
Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical
Publishing House.
- 1922c Theosophy and the New Order. The
Theosophist 44 (October): 11-35.
- 1923a Brahmavidya. The Brahmavidya
Library, no. 1. Adyar, Madras: The
Theosophical Publishing House.

- 1923b Initiation: The Perfecting of Man. Chicago: The Theosophical Press.
- 1923c In the Outer Court. American ed. Chicago: The Theosophical Press.
- 1923d Religion: or God Manifesting as Love. The Theosophist 44 (February): 495-503; 44 (March): 599-606.
- 1923e The Spiritual Life. Chicago: The Theosophical Press.
- 1924a Civilisation's Deadlocks and the Keys. Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House.
- 1924b Dr. Besant's Talk to Members of the Order. The Herald of the Star 13 (August): 332-36.
- 1924c Evolution and Man's Destiny. London: The Theosophical Society in England.
- 1925a Ancient Ideals in Modern Life: Being the four Convention Lectures delivered at the Twenty-fifth Anniversary of the Theosophical Society at Benares, December, 1900. 2d ed. Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House.
- 1925b Shall India Live or Die? N.p.: The National Home Rule League.
- 1925c The Theosophical Society and the Occult Hierarchy. London: The Theosophical Publishing House Limited.
- 1926a Address by Dr. Besant. The Herald of the Star 15 (August): 314-17.
- 1926b How a World Teacher Comes As Seen by Ancient and Modern Psychology: Four Lectures Delivered at the Queen's Hall, London, During June and July, 1926. London: The

Theosophical Publishing House
Limited.

- 1926c India: Bond or Free? London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, Ltd.
- 1927a The Future of the Order. The Herald of the Star 16 (September): 342-45.
- 1927b The New Civilisation: Four Lectures Delivered at the Queen's Hall, London, in June 1927. London: The Theosophical Publishing House Limited.
- 1927c Public Lecture. The Herald of the Star 16 (November): 411-15.
- 1928 Krishnaji. International Star Bulletin 1928, no. 8:8.
- 1929a From Peace to Power. The Theosophist 51 (November): 148-51.
- 1929b India and the World. The Star 2 (March): 14-15.
- 1930a A Bird's Eye View of India's Past as the Foundation for India's Future. 4th ed., rev. and enl. Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House.
- 1930b Presidential Address. The Adyar Theosophist 51 (February): 455-76.
- 1930c Questions and Answers Meeting. The Adyar Theosophist 51 (January): 441-46.
- 1930d To Members of the Theosophical Society. The Adyar Theosophist 51 (March): 523-35.
- 1931 England, India, Afghanistan, and the Story of Afghanistan or Why the Tory Government Gags the Indian Press. 1st Indian ed. Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House.

- 1939a The Besant Spirit: Ideals in Education. The Besant Spirit Series, vol. 2. Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House.
- 1939b Indian Problems. The Besant Spirit, vol. 3. Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House.
- 1940a The High Purpose of War. The Besant Spirit Series, no. 6. Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House.
- 1940b Sanātana-Dharma: An Advanced Textbook of Hindu Religion and Ethics. 1st Adyar ed. Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House.
- 1943 The Pedigree of Man. New ed. Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House.
- 1944 The Great Vision: Annie Besant's Plan for the New World. The Besant Spirit Series, no. 11. Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House.
- 1952 Man and His Bodies. 10th ed. Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House.
- 1966 The Ancient Wisdom. 7th Adyar ed. Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House.
- [1970] 1972 Seven Great Religions. Slightly Abridged, 5th ed. Reprint. Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House.
- 1972 A Study in Consciousness. 6th ed. Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House.
- N.d. Adyar Popular Lectures 1-12. N.p.

- N.d. Auguste Comte; His Philosophy, His Religion, and His Sociology. London: C. Watts.
- N.d. The Changing World and Lectures to Theosophical Students: Fifteen Lectures delivered in London during May, June, and July 1909. Chicago: The Theosophical Press.
- N.d. The Fruits of Christianity. London: Freethought Publishing Company.
- N.d. In Defense of Hinduism. Benares: Theosophical Publishing Society.
- N.d. In Defense of Theosophy. London: Theosophical Publishing Society.
- N.d. The Masters. Chicago: The Theosophical Press.
- N.d. Theosophy. London: T. C. and E. C. Jack.
- Besant, A., and C. W. Leadbeater 1901 Thought Forms. Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House.
- Besant, A., and C. W. Leadbeater 1922 Man: Whence, How and Whither. Chicago: The Theosophical Press.
- Besant, A., C. Jinarajadasa, and G. S. Arundale 1923 The Real and the Unreal: Being the Four Convention Lectures delivered at Adyar at the Forty-seventh Anniversary of the Theosophical Society, December, 1922. Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House.
- Besant, A., and C. W. Leadbeater 1924 The Lives of Alcyone, 2 vols. Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House.
- Besant, A., and C. Jinarajadasa 1925 To the Members of the General Council of the Theosophical

Society. The Theosophist 47
(December): 408-9.

Besant, A., and
C. W. Leadbeater
1951

Occult Chemistry. Edited by C.
Jinarajadasa. 3d and enl. ed.
Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical
Publishing House.

Besant, A., ed.
1920

Gandhian Non-Co-Operation or Shall
India Commit Suicide? Madras: "New
India" Office.

1962

The Universal Text Book of Religion
and Morals, Part I. 3d ed. Adyar,
Madras: The Theosophical Publishing
House.

Blavatsky, H. P.
1893

The Key to Theosophy. 3d rev.
English ed. London: Theosophical
Publishing Society.

1971

The Secret Doctrine. The Adyar ed.,
vol. 5. Adyar, Madras: The
Theosophical Publishing House.

1972

Isis Unveiled. H. P. Blavatsky
Collected Writings 1877. 2 vols.
Wheaton, IL: The Theosophical
Publishing House.

1978

The Secret Doctrine. H. P.
Blavatsky Collected Writings 1888.
2 vols. Adyar, Madras: The
Theosophical Publishing House.

Blavatsky, H. P.,
trans.
1973

The Voice of the Silence: Being
Chosen Fragments from the "Book
of the Golden Precepts." For the
Daily Use of Lanoos (Disciple).
2d Quest Book Miniature ed.
Wheaton, IL: The Theosophical
Publishing House.

Bondurant, J.
1965

Conquest of Violence: The Gandhian
Philosophy of Conflict. rev. ed.

Berkeley: University of California Press.

Bonner, H. B.
1908

Charles Bradlaugh: A Record of His Life and Work: With an account of his Parliamentary Struggle, Politics, and Teachings by John M. Robertson, M.P. 7th ed. 2 vols. in 1. London: T. Fisher Unwin.

Bott, A.
[1931] 1972

Our Fathers (1870-1900), Manners and Customs of the Ancient Victorians: A Survey in Pictures and Text of Their History, Morals, Wars, Sports, Inventions & Politics. Reprint. New York: Benjamin Blom, Inc.

Bradlaugh, C.
1888

Has Man a Soul? London: Freethought Publishing Company.

1933

Champion of Liberty: Charles Bradlaugh. London: C. A. Watts & Co. Ltd. and The Pioneer Press.

Bradlaugh, C.,
A. Besant, and
C. Watts, eds.
1876

The Freethinker's Textbook. London: C. Watts.

Bright, E.
1936

Old Memories and Letters of Annie Besant. London: The Theosophical Publishing House.

British Broad-
casting Corpor-
ation, ed.
1949

Ideas and Beliefs of the Victorians. London: Sylvan Press Limited.

Brooke, S. A., ed.
1882

Life and Letters of Fred. W. Robertson, M.A. 2 vols. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, & Co.

Brose, O. J.
1971

Frederick Denison Maurice:

Rebellious Conformist. N.p.: Ohio University Press.

Brown, A. W.
1961

William Ellery Channing. New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc.

Büchner, L.
1886

The Origin and Progress of Religion. Our Corner 7 (January): 14-21.

1887

Freethought and Philosophic Doctrines: Considerations on Spiritualism, Materialism, and Positivism. Our Corner 9 (October): 213-18.

Budd, S.
1977

Varieties of Unbelief: Atheists and Agnostics in English Society 1850-1960. London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd.

Burrow, J. W.
1966

Evolution and Society: A Study in Victorian Social Theory. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bury, J. B.
1921

The Idea of Progress: An Inquiry into Its Origin and Growth. London: Macmillan and Co., Limited.

Campbell, B. F.
1980

Ancient Wisdom Revived: A History of the Theosophical Movement. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Chadwick, O.
1970

The Victorian Church. Part 2. New York: Oxford University Press.

Channing, W. H., ed.
1873

The Perfect Life, In Twelve Discourses. By William Ellery Channing, D.D. Boston: Roberts Brothers.

- Clephane, I.
[1932] 1969 Our Mothers: A Cavalcade in Pictures, Quotation and Description of Late Victorian Women 1870-1900. Edited by Alan Bott. Reprint. New York: Benjamin Blom, Inc.
- Cohn, N.
1957 The Pursuit of the Millennium. London: Secker & Warburg.
- Commager, H. S.
1960 Theodore Parker: An Anthology. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Courtney, H.
1887 Hylo-Idealism or Positive Agnosticism. Our Corner 10 (August): 111-15.
- Cousins, J. H., ed.
1947 The Annie Besant Centenary Book. Adyar, Madras: The Besant Centenary Celebrations Committee.
- Crete, B.
1980a The Reappearance of the Christ and the Masters of Wisdom. London: The Tara Press.
- 1980b Messages from Maitreya the Christ. Vol. 1, One Hundred Messages. London: Tara Press.
- 1986 Maitreya's Mission. Amsterdam: Share International Foundation.
- Davies, H.
1962 Worship and Theology in England. Vol. 4, From Newman to Martineau, 1850- 1900. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Davis, L.
1983 Science, Religions and the Ageless Wisdom Point Toward a World Religion for the New Age. Farmingdale, NY: Coleman Publishing.
- Eichler, M.
1971 Charismatic and Ideological

Leadership in Secular and Religious
Millenarian Movements: A
Sociological Study. Ph.D. diss.,
Duke University.

Farquhar, J. N.
1967

Modern Religious Movements in
India. 1st Indian ed. Delhi:
Munshiram Manoharlal.

Ferguson, M.
1980

The Aquarian Conspiracy: Personal
and Social Transformation in the
1980s. Los Angeles: J. P. Tarcher,
Inc.

Festinger, L.,
H. W. Riecker,
and S. Schachter
1956

When Prophecy Fails. Minneapolis:
University of Minnesota Press.

Fuchs, S.
1965

Rebellious Prophets: A Study of
Messianic Movements in Indian
Religions. New York: Asia
Publishing House.

Grosso, M.
1985

The Final Choice: Playing the
Survival Game. Walpole, NH:
Stillpoint Publishing.

Harrison, J. F. C.
1969

Quest for the New Moral World:
Robert Owen and the Owenites in
Britain and America. New York:
Charles Scribner's Sons.

1979

The Second Coming: Popular
Millenarianism 1780-1850. New
Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University.

Hember, R. G.
1888

Secularism from a Positivist point
of view. Our Corner 12 (October):
243-75.

Holroyd, S.
1980

The Quest of the Quiet Mind: The
Philosophy of Krishnamurti.
Wellingborough, England: The
Aquarian Press.

- Holyoake, G. J.,
and C. Bradlaugh
1870 Secularism, Scepticism, and
Atheism, Verbatim Report of the
Proceedings of a Two Nights'
Public Debate between Messrs.
G. J. Holyoake & C. Bradlaugh.
London: Austin & Co.
- Houghton, W. E.
1957 The Victorian Frame of Mind
1830-1870. London: Oxford
University Press.
- Houston, J.
1982 The Possible Human: A Course in
Extending Your Physical, Mental,
and Creative Abilities.
Los Angeles: J. P. Tarcher.
- Jayakar, P.
1986 Krishnamurti: A Biography.
San Francisco: Harper & Row.
- Jinarajadasa, C.
1938 Occult Investigations: A
Description of the Work of Annie
Besant and C. W. Leadbeater.
Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical
Publishing House.
- Kos, K.
N.d. Harmonic Convergence: The
Prophecies. Planet Art Network,
Boulder, Colorado. Promotional
flyer.
- Krishnamurti, J.
1926a Mr. Krishnamurti's concluding words
of an address delivered to Star
Members at Adyar on December 28th,
1925. The Herald of the Star 15
(January): 2.
- 1926b Self Preparation. The Herald of the
Star 15 (April): 139.
- 1927a Meditation and Contemplation. The
Herald of the Star 16 (December):
459-61.
- 1927b Seek Peace and Establish It. The
Herald of the Star 16 (October):
399-401.

- 1927c The Star Council, Welcome by Krishnaji, July 29th, 1927. The Herald of the Star 16 (September): 331-34.
- 1927d To Meet Again. The Herald of the Star 16 (September): 346-48.
- 1928a An Interview with Krishnaji, London, England, 20 June 1928. International Star Bulletin 1928, no. 8:9-15.
- 1928b Questions and Answers. International Star Bulletin 1928, no. 10:6-12.
- 1928c Questions and Answers. The Star 1 (June): 20-23.
- 1929a The Coming Dawn. The Star 2 (February): 5-7.
- 1929b The Dissolution of the Order of the Star: A Statement by J. Krishnamurti. International Star Bulletin 1929, no. 2 (September): 28-34.
- 1929c Morning Talk, Tuesday, August 6. International Star Bulletin 1929, no. 2 (September): 15-21.
- 1930 An Address to the New York Theosophical Federation. International Star Bulletin 1930, no. 5:18-24.
- Kunz, D.
1986 HPB Vindicated by Society for Psychical Research in England. The American Theosophist 74 (July): 226-27.
- Kunz, D.,
Metzger, M., eds.
1987 The Necessity of Peace, The American Theosophist, Special Issue, 75 (May).
- Linton, G. E.,
and V. Hanson,
eds. Readers Guide to The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett. Adyar,

- 1972 Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House.
- Lutyens, M.
1975 Krishnamurti: The Years of Awakening. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- 1983 Krishnamurti: The Years of Fulfillment. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- McDavid, W. D.
1977 An Introduction to Esoteric Principles. Wheaton, IL: The Department of Education, The Theosophical Society in America.
- McGee, J. E.
1931 A Crusade for Humanity: The History of Organized Positivism in England. London: Watts & Co.
- MacKenzie, N. and J.
1977 The Fabians. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Maurice, F. W.
1879 The Doctrine of Sacrifice. London: Macmillan and Co.
- Medicine Eagle, B.
N.d. The Turning of the Age. Source unknown. Promotional flyer for the Harmonic Convergence.
- Mill, J. S.
1867 An Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy and of the Principle Philosophical Questions Discussed in His Writings. 3d ed. London: Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer.
- Moore, H. B.
1886 Creed of Materialism. Our Corner 7 (March): 175-76.
- Murphet, H.
1972 Hammer on the Mountain: The Life of

- Henry Steel Olcott (1832-1907).
Wheaton, IL: The Theosophical
Publishing House.
- 1975 When Daylight Comes: A Biography of
 Helena Petrovna Blavatsky. A Quest
 Book. Wheaton, IL: The Theosophical
 Publishing House.
- Needleman, J.
1977 The New Religions. New York: E. P.
 Dutton & Co., Inc.
- Nethercot, A. H.
1960 The First Five Lives of Annie
 Besant. Chicago: The University of
 Chicago Press.
- 1963 The Last Four Lives of Annie
 Besant. Chicago: The University of
 Chicago Press.
- Olcott, H. S.
1875 Inaugural Address of the President
 of the Theosophical Society,
 Delivered at Mott Memorial Hall, in
 the City of New York, at the First
 Regular Meeting of the Society,
 November 17th, 1875. New York:
 Printed and Electrotyped by Order
 of the Society.
- 1895 Old Diary Leaves: The True Story of
 the Theosophical Society. New York:
 G. P. Putnam's Sons.
- Oliver, W. H.
1978 Prophets and Millennialists: The
 Uses of Biblical Prophecy in
 England from the 1790s to the
 1840s. N.p.: Auckland University
 Press.
- Olson, T.
1982 Millennialism, utopianism, and
 progress. Toronto: University of
 Toronto Press.
- Owen, H. F.
1968 Towards Nation-Wide Agitation and

- Organisation: The Home Rule Leagues 1915-18. In Soundings in South Asian History, edited by D. A. Low. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Parker, T.
1885 Views of Religion. Boston: American Unitarian Association.
- Ransom, J.
1938 A Short History of the Theosophical Society. Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House.
- Robertson, F. W.
1859 Sermons Preached at Trinity Chapel, Brighton. 3d Series. Boston: Tucker and Fields.
- Robinson, R.
1954 Definition. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Royle, E.
1971 Radical Politics 1790-1900: Religion and Unbelief. London: Longman Group Limited.
- Sandeem, E. R.
1970 The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism 1800-1930. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Saville, J., ed.
1970a A Selection of the Political Pamphlets of Charles Bradlaugh. New York: Augustus M. Kelley, Publishers.
- 1970b A Selection of the Social and Political Pamphlets of Annie Besant. New York: Augustus M. Kelley, Publishers.
- A Server
[pseud.]
1934 The Hierarchy of The Rishis, Sages and Saints. In Our Elder Brethren: The Great Ones in the World's Service, edited by Annie Besant.

Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical
Publishing House.

Shringy, R. K.
1976

Philosophy of J. Krishnamurti: A
Systematic Study. New Delhi:
Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers
Pvt. Ltd.

Simon, W. M.
1963

European Positivism in the
Nineteenth Century: An Essay in
Intellectual History. Ithaca, NY:
Cornell University Press.

Sinnett, A. P.
1884

Esoteric Buddhism. Boston:
Houghton, Mifflin & Co.

1885

The Occult World. Boston: Houghton,
Mifflin & Co.

Smith, W. S.
1967

The London Heretics 1870-1914.
London: Constable & Co. Ltd.

Standley, F. L.
1972

Stopford Brooke. New York: Twayne
Publishers, Inc.

Talmon, J. L.
1960

Political Messianism: The Romantic
Phase. London: Secker & Warbur.

Talmon, Y.
1962

Pursuit of the Millennium: The
Relation Between Religious and
Social Change. Archives Européennes
de Sociologie 3: 125-48.

1966

Millenarian Movements. Archives
Européennes de Sociologie 7:159-200.

Thomson, D.
1950

England in the Nineteenth Century
(1815-1915). The Pelican History of
England, vol. 8. Middlesex,
England: Penguin Books Ltd.

- Thrupp, S. L., ed.
1962 Millennial Dreams in Action: Essays in Comparative Study. Comparative Studies in Society and History, Supplement II. The Hague: Mouton & Co.
- Tillett, G.
1982 The Elder Brother: A Biography of Charles Webster Leadbeater. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Toon, P., ed.
1970 Puritans, the Millennium and the Future of Israel: Puritan Eschatology 1600 to 1660. Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., Ltd.
- Tuveson, E. L.
1949 Millennium and Utopia: A Study in the Background of the Idea of Progress. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Wachtmeister, C.
et al.
1976 Reminiscences of H. P. Blavatsky and The Secret Doctrine. A Quest Book. Wheaton, IL: The Theosophical Publishing House.
- West, G.
1930 Annie Besant. In Six Brilliant Englishwomen. London: Gerald Howe.
- Wheeler, J. M.
1886 The Hindu "Song Celestial." Our Corner 7 (January): 11-14.
- Wickremeratne, L. A.
1982 An American Bodhisattva and an Irish Karmayogin: Reflections on Two European Encounters with Non-Christian Religious Cultures in the Nineteenth Century. Journal of the American Academy of Religion 50 (June): 237-54.
- Williams, G. M.
1974 The Quest for Meaning of Swāmī Vivekānanda : A Study of Religious

Change. Chico, CA: New Horizons Press.

Newspapers

1875-1887 The National Reformer (London).

1888 The Link (London).

1915-1927 New India (Madras).

INDEX

- Adams, Robert, 334
Adyar Bulletin, 74
 Age of Aquarius, 6, 328,
 332, 336-37
ahimsa, 81, 246-49
The American
 Theosophist, 323
 amillennialism, 20
 Anabaptists, 26
 Anglicans, 30
 Arcane School, 327
 Arguëlles, José, 339-43
 Arnold, Edwin, 58
 Arnold, Matthew, 45
 Arundale, Francesca, 71
 Arundale, George, 67,
 71, 76, 78, 82, 92-
 93, 95, 97, 279, 283,
 315
 Arundale, Rukmini Devi,
 93, 95
 Aryans, 196-98, 215,
 231-32, 239-40, 263,
 266
 Assagioli, Roberto, 332,
 337
 astral body, 187, 189-
 90, 221
 atmic body (Atma),
 186-87, 217
 atonement, 9, 41, 45,
 49, 116, 159
At the Feet of the
 Master, 75, 77
 Augustine, 20
 Aveling, Edward, 57

 Bailey, Alice, 324-34,
 337, 343
 Bailey, Foster, 326-27
 Baird, Robert D., 7, 16-
 17
 Barron, Steven, 334
 Basu, Upendranath,
 248-49
 Beesley, E. S., 128
 Benares Hindu
 University, 2, 76-77,
 81, 86, 212, 229, 246
 Besant, Annie

 atheist & Freethinker,
 9-11, 34, 41, 50-57,
 59-60, 65, 115, 117-
 21, 123-27, 131-37,
 144, 149-50, 183,
 307-13
 biographers, 1, 4-5
 clairvoyant investiga-
 tions, 72-73, 75, 92,
 315
 contraception, 53-54,
 68, 135, 194
 death, 96-97
 education of, 42-43
 father, 41
 interest in science,
 56-57, 59, 115, 125-
 26, 129
 internment, 3, 82
 London school board,
 63-64, 68, 142, 228
 martyr, 8, 194
 millenarianism &
 progressive
 messianism, 27, 33-
 34, 37-38, 62, 71,
 74-76, 79, 90, 115-
 17, 126, 130-33,
 135-37, 142-44, 147,
 149, 175, 182-83, 185,
 193, 198-200, 209,
 216, 243-44, 247, 249,
 251-52, 263, 270, 275,
 297, 307-20
 monism, 117-19, 121-
 26, 133, 136, 138,
 142, 145-46, 149,
 169-74, 176, 182, 184,
 196, 216, 223, 227,
 229, 283, 295-96,
 308-10, 318, 320
 mother, 41, 49
 new religion, 8, 13-
 14, 126-27, 129-30,
 133, 136, 143-44, 192,
 199, 277, 279-80,
 282-84, 289, 295-97,
 308-9, 314, 318
 presidency of Indian
 National Congress, 3,
 82-83
 presidency of

- Theosophical Society,
 2, 73-74
 religious doubts, 43-
 46, 58, 109, 115-20,
 136, 309
 siblings, 41-42
 socialist, 10-11, 34,
 60-61, 63-65, 67, 117,
 135-43, 149, 183, 242-
 44, 272, 307-8, 310-
 13, 320
 survey of her
 biography, 1-3
 theist, 9, 47, 49, 99,
 116
 Theosophist, 10-12,
 34, 37, 41, 55, 62,
 65-74, 115, 117, 123,
 125-26, 133, 136-37,
 142-43, 145-47, 149-
 50, 168-200, 239, 252,
 263, 283, 307-8,
 310-12
 ultimate concern, 7-
 14, 19, 33-34, 126,
 131-33, 144, 169, 178,
 180-81, 223, 229, 245,
 307-8, 314-16, 319
 Besant, Arthur Digby,
 44, 55
 Besant, Frank, 44, 46-
 49, 51, 55
 Besant, Mabel, 44, 49,
 55-56, 109, 115-17
Bhagavad Gītā, 13, 58,
 123, 176, 222, 227
 Black Magicians, 69, 94
 Blavatsky, Helena P., 2,
 12, 65-69, 91, 104,
 157-58, 160-70, 178,
 186, 198, 202, 275-79,
 282, 324-25, 334, 344
 Bloody Sunday, 62
bodhisattva or
 Bodhisattva, 180, 192,
 198, 266-67, 271-73,
 276-79, 296, 328, 331
 Bodin, Jean, 28
 Booth, Charles, 111-12
 Booth, William, 112
 Bradlaugh, Charles, 1,
 50-54, 59-61, 63, 66-
 67, 80, 120-23, 126-
 27, 133-35, 137, 250,
 281, 311
 Bridges, J. H., 128
 Brooke, Stopford, 45,
 116, 149-59
 brotherhood, 13, 31, 34,
 38, 59, 73, 79, 90-91,
 126, 133, 136, 141,
 143, 147, 149, 161,
 166, 169, 174-76, 178-
 86, 191, 193, 196,
 198-99, 200, 209-10,
 213-14, 216-17, 223,
 228-29, 231-32, 240,
 245, 247, 251, 263-64,
 269-72, 280, 283, 292,
 296-97, 307-11, 313-
 14, 319, 323-24, 328,
 331, 338
 Brothers of Service, 13,
 79, 212, 233
 Bruno, Giordano, 154
 Büchner, Ludwig, 58,
 138, 146
 Budd, Susan, 4
 buddhi, 187-88, 191,
 197, 199, 217, 264,
 271, 274-75, 328
 buddhic body, 186-88,
 191
 Burnier, Radha, 97
 Burrows, Herbert, 63,
 65
 Bury, J. B., 27, 37,
 130, 132
 California, 198, 263-
 64, 272, 275, 285,
 290, 325, 332, 338
 Campbell, Bruce F.,
 159-60, 162
 caste, 13, 222, 231-33,
 252
 causal body (Higher
 Manas), 186-89, 217,
 279
 Central Hindu College,
 2, 70-71, 76-77, 212,
 226, 229
 Central Hindu Girls'
 School, 71
 Channing, William
 Ellery, 116, 149-50
 charismatic leader, 24-
 26, 279, 315, 317

- Church of England, 9,
41-43, 67, 113
Christ, the
See World-Teacher
Cohn, Norman, 21-22,
24
Coleman, William
Emmette, 162, 167
Commonweal, 79
Commonwealth of India
Bill, 3, 87-88,
233-34, 241-44
Comte, Auguste, 50,
127-29, 133, 137, 147,
308
Congreve, Richard, 128-
29
Conway, Moncure, 49-50
Coulomb affair, 65-66,
73, 165, 202, 276
Courtney, Herbert, 145
Crene, Benjamin, 332-34
- Darwin, Charles, 32,
113, 138
Das, Bhagavan, 77, 96
Daughters of India, 13,
79
Davis, Lola, 331-32
Dayananda, Swami, 163-
64
de Chardin, Pierre
Teilhard, 337
Descartes, 28
Devachan, 189
dharma, 13, 222, 231
D. K., Master (Dwjäl
Khul, "the Tibetan"),
327, 332, 334, 343
duty, 9, 222, 231
Dyer, General, 84-85
- Eichler, Margrit, 22-26
Eliade, Mircea, 16
Esoteric Section, 66,
68-69, 95-96, 166,
325-27
essential-intuitional
method, 16
etheric double, 187,
190
Extremists, 80, 82, 84
evolution, 12, 22, 27,
32, 38, 126, 137-38,
142, 154, 169, 171,
176, 186, 191-96, 199,
209-12, 217-18, 221,
229-30, 242, 244-45,
268, 271, 283, 307,
310-12, 314, 320, 328,
335, 338-41
- Fabian Society, 2,
60-61, 67, 114
Fawcett, E. D., 145
Ferguson, Marilyn, 336-
38
Foote, G. W., 66
Freethought Publishing
Company, 2, 53, 67
French Revolution, 30
The Fruits of
Philosophy, 53-54
Fuchs, Stephen, 24
- Gandhi, Mohandas, 3,
81-82, 84-89, 244-51
God, 12-13, 31, 45-46,
49, 109, 115-22,
126-27, 131, 133,
143-45, 149, 154, 160,
171-76, 184, 209, 219,
227-28, 243, 249, 268,
279-80, 282, 295, 308,
310, 329, 338
Gould, Steven Jay, 338
The Great Invocation,
329-31, 336, 343
Great White Brotherhood,
194
Greg, W. R., 45
gross body, 187, 189-91
Grosso, Michael, 320
guru, 220
- Hakewill, George, 28
Happy Valley Foundation
(Association), 95-96,
272-73
Harrison, Frederic,
128-29
Harmonic Convergence,
339-43
Harrison, J. F. C., 29
Headlam, S. D., 143
The Herald of the Star,
76, 95
history, 17

- Hitler, Adolf, 23, 26
 Hodgson, Richard, 65, 166
 Home Rule League, 80-85, 88
 Houston, Jean, 338-39
 Hume, A. O., 164
 Huxley, Aldous, 337
 Hylo-Idealism, 145

 ideological leader, 25, 315, 318
 India
 education, 212, 223-29, 231, 234, 252
 Home Rule, 2-3, 5, 71, 78, 87, 89, 200, 210, 212-13, 225, 228, 234-42, 244-45, 250-52, 315
 social reform, 79, 212, 229-33, 246, 251-52
 spiritual leader of the world, 79, 209-11, 213-16, 230
 Indian Boy Scouts' Association, 13, 79
 Indian National Congress, 3, 82-89, 233, 245
 Indo-British Commonwealth, 3, 80, 210-11, 213, 245
 industrialization, England, 109, 113, 138
 intuition, 37, 147, 199, 217, 271, 282-83
Isis Unveiled, 162-63, 167-69
Īśvara(s), 186, 216-17, 219, 230

 Jallianwala Bagh massacre, 84
 Jayakar, Pupul, 106-7, 302-3
 Jesus Christ, 9, 20, 41, 47, 49, 114, 116, 133, 150, 192, 199, 267, 273-74, 277, 293
 Jinarajadasa, C., 67, 72, 74, 92-93

 Jinnah, M. A., 83-86
jīvātma, 217, 238-39
 John the Baptist, 26, 315
 Judge, William Q., 66, 68-69, 161, 163, 165
 Jung, C. G., 337

 karma, 169, 175-80, 182, 209, 218, 228, 265, 291
 Knowlton, Charles, 53
 Köllerström, Oscar, 93
 Koot Hoomi, (Master Kuthumi or K. H.), 73, 75, 164, 199, 276-77, 279, 325-27, 334
 Kos, Karen, 342
 Krishnamurti, J., 3, 75-78, 85, 90-97, 106-7, 198, 274-75, 279, 284-97, 302-4, 308, 314-15, 317-19, 323, 332-34, 337

 Lakshman, 77-78
 Lansbury, George, 64, 88
 Laski, H. J., 4
 Law & Liberty League, 62-64, 137, 143-44, 308
 Leadbeater, C. W., 58, 67, 72-75, 77-78, 90-93, 96-97, 104, 198, 277, 279, 284, 302, 304, 315, 326
 leader, 26
 LeRoy, Loys, 28
 Liberal Catholic Church, 90-92, 289
 Liberals, 86, 89
Link, 62, 64, 144, 308
 Logos (Logoi), 186, 191-92, 216, 263, 283, 312, 338
 London Exhibition, 32, 132
Lucifer, 66, 166, 169
 Lutyens, Emily, 93, 285

 Maha-Chohan, 271
 Mahatma letters, 59,

- 68-69
Maitreya, Lord, 3,
75, 92-94, 103-4,
198, 267, 270, 275,
278-79, 284-88, 293,
302-4, 312, 315, 317,
331-34
Malaviya, Madan Mohan,
76, 83, 85
Mansel, Dean, 45, 50,
118-19
Manu, 197-98, 215, 271-
73, 275-76, 278-79,
296-97, 312
Marryat, Ellen, 42, 44,
109, 316
Marx, Eleanor, 57
Marx, Karl, 57
Maslow, Abraham, 337
Masters (Mahatmas), 11-
12, 65-66, 68, 73, 75,
79, 92, 150, 157,
161-67, 192-95, 212,
242, 263, 266, 274,
276-79, 284-86, 288,
290, 294, 312, 315,
324-27, 329-32, 334-
35, 338
Masters, Robert, 339
match girls, 2, 14, 63
Maurice, F. D., 45, 116,
149-50
Mazzini, Giuseppe, 209,
320
Medicine Eagle, Brooke,
342
Meditation Group for the
New Age, 330, 332, 337
Meditation Magazine,
330, 343
messiah, 23-24, 26-27,
30, 34, 182, 193, 200,
297, 315-17, 323-24,
328, 335, 342
messianism, 24, 27, 263,
270, 297, 312, 314,
316, 320, 335, 342
Mill, James Stuart, 32,
50
millenarianism, 6, 8,
19-34, 37, 130, 135-
36, 142, 149, 182,
185, 193, 200, 243,
249, 251, 263, 297,
307-17, 319-20, 323-
24, 328-29, 335-36,
338-39, 342
millenarianism,
Christian, 19-20,
27-28, 30-31, 37,
316
millennium, 19-22,
25, 30-31
Millerites, 25
mind body (Lower Manas),
186, 188-89
Moderates, 80, 82, 84,
86
Monad, 186, 217, 221,
223
Montagu-Chelmsford
Reforms, 3, 83-85
Montagu, E. S., 82-83
Moore, H. Bramley, 145
Morya (Master M), 66,
69, 73, 164, 276-77,
279
Moslem League, 82-83
Müller, Max, 58
mystic, 281-82, 284
Narayaniah, Jeddu, 75,
77-78
The National Reformer,
50-53, 58-60, 62, 127,
138
National Secular
Society, 10, 50, 52,
59-60, 63, 66-67, 134,
311
Nazis, 22-23, 26
Needleman, Jacob, 338
Nehru, Jawaharlal, 81,
85, 89
Nehru, Motilal, 3, 84,
85, 88-89
Nehru Report, 88-89
Neo-Theosophy, 275, 277
Nethercot, Arthur H., 1,
5
New Age, 6, 8, 315, 317,
320, 327-28, 336-39,
342-44
New Civilization, 11,
13, 74-75, 79, 95,
193-94, 209, 213, 216,
223, 267, 269-72, 275,
279, 282, 284, 297,

- 312, 314, 327
New India, 79, 82, 251
 Newman, Francis, 47
 new race, 74, 91-92
 new religion, 13-14, 62,
 130, 199, 277, 279-80,
 282-84, 289, 295-97,
 308-9, 314, 318, 331,
 333
 Nityananda, J., 75-78,
 85, 91-93, 284-85
 non-cooperation, 81, 87,
 89, 245-48, 250

 Occult Hierarchy, 173-
 74, 192, 197, 211,
 215, 252, 271, 275,
 283, 329
 occultism, 159-60, 162,
 166
 occultist, 281-82, 284
 Olcott, Henry S., 2, 66,
 68-70, 72-74, 104,
 157-58, 160-66, 168,
 214, 233
 Oliver, W. H., 29-30
 Olson, Theodore, 27-29,
 36-37
 Order of the Rising
 Sun, 76
 Order of the Round
 Table, 74, 90
 Order of the Star in
 the East (Order of the
 Star), 3, 34, 62, 76,
 90, 95-96, 200, 270,
 275, 286, 288-89, 313,
 317, 323, 330, 333-36,
 345
 organizer, 26
 organizer-leader, 26,
 34, 315
Our Corner, 57-58, 61,
 64, 145-46
 Owen, Robert, 31, 140

pañchāyat, 225-26, 236,
 241-42
 pantheism, 117-18, 122,
 124, 133, 136, 145,
 149, 154, 169, 174,
 308
 Parker, Theodore, 47,
 116, 119, 149-50

 Path to Perfection, 194-
 95
 pattern of ultimate
 concern, 7
 post-millennialism, 19-
 20, 27-31, 33-34, 307,
 310, 311, 315, 317,
 323-24, 336, 338-39,
 344
 Pratt, Doris, 107
 pre-millenarianism, 6,
 19-23, 26-31, 131,
 307, 310-14, 316
 progress, 6, 12-13, 27-
 29, 31-34, 37, 65,
 112-13, 116, 130, 133,
 135-36, 138, 159, 171,
 175, 177, 182, 191,
 215, 230, 307, 311-12,
 314-17, 320, 328, 340
 progressive messianism,
 6, 27, 30, 33-34, 117,
 130, 137, 182, 193,
 263, 275, 297, 307-9,
 312-18, 320, 323-24,
 328-29, 335-36, 339,
 342, 344
 prophet, 24, 26
 prophet-messiah, 26,
 315, 317
 Providence, 28, 31
 Pusey, Dr., 47-48

 Quetzalcoatl, 342

 Rajagopal, D., 93
 Reiki Association of
 America, 330
 reincarnation, 146,
 168-69, 175-79, 182,
 188, 214, 218, 223,
 228, 239, 244, 265,
 283, 291
 religio-historical
 method, 5, 7-8, 16-17
 religious questioning
 in the Victorian age,
 113-14
 revolutionary chiliasm,
 24
 Roberts, William, 43-44,
 109
 Robertson, Frederick W.,
 116, 149-50

- Robertson, John M., 122
 Rogers, Carl, 337
 Rogers, L. W., 327
 Root Races, 168, 196-99,
 221, 248, 266-67, 272,
 274-75, 277-78, 312
 Rowlatt Acts, 84
 Rsi Agastya, 78-79, 212
- sacrifice, 5, 9-12,
 114-15, 149, 169,
 175-80, 184, 192, 218,
 220, 222-23, 228-30,
 246-49, 265, 267-68,
 274, 278, 280, 318-19
 Satyagraha, 3, 81-82,
 84-86, 89, 245-59
 Scaravelli, Vanda, 107
 School for Esoteric
 Studies, 330
 Scott, Thomas, 48-49
The Secret Doctrine, 2,
 65, 163, 166-70, 195,
 266, 277-78, 309, 325
 service, 5, 9-14, 19,
 42, 114, 129, 131,
 133, 143-44, 169,
 175-76, 178-79, 194,
 220, 222-23, 227,
 229, 245, 248, 274,
 282, 291, 307-8, 314,
 319
 seven planes, 186
 Shamballa, 212, 334, 344
 Shaw, George Bernard,
 3-4, 61
 Sinnett, A. P., 59, 67,
 74, 145, 164
 Sixth Root Race, 147,
 197-99, 244, 264-66,
 270-72, 274-78, 311-
 12, 328
 sixth sub-race, 91-92,
 147, 197-99, 263-65,
 270-72, 277, 279, 282,
 290, 295, 311, 314
 Smith, Warren Sylvester,
 4
 Social Democratic
 Federation, 2, 60,
 62-63, 67
 Society for Psychical
 Research, 65, 165-66
 Sons of India, 13, 79
 Spartakists, 26
 Spencer, Herbert, 32,
 139
 Spinoza, 122
 spiritualism, 58, 67,
 157-62
 Star Camps, 90, 92, 96
Star Review, 95
 Stead, W. T., 14, 62,
 65, 143-44, 308
 superhuman agent(s), 6,
 8, 20-23, 25, 27, 29-
 31, 33, 35, 136, 142,
 182, 191-93, 197-98,
 212-13, 263, 266-67,
 270-79, 283-88,
 293-97, 307-9, 311-17,
 320, 323-36, 338-39,
 341-42, 344
 sutratma, 187
 swarajya, 86
- Talmon, Yonina, 21-
 23, 26, 312-13
 Tennyson, Alfred, 32
 Theosophical Educational
 Trust, 212
 Theosophical movement,
 324, 336, 343
Theosophical Network,
 324
 Theosophical Order of
 Service, 74
 Theosophical Society,
 2, 6, 58-59, 65-68,
 72, 74, 80, 91, 96-97,
 157, 161-66, 169, 172,
 174, 199, 212, 214,
 216, 233, 248, 276-77,
 279, 283-84, 294-95,
 308, 323-24, 326-27,
 334, 345
 Theosophical Society
 in America, 323,
 325-27
The Theosophist, 74,
 145, 164
 Theosophy, 4-6, 34, 37,
 59, 62, 126, 136-37,
 154, 158, 160, 169-71,
 174, 179-83, 186, 191,
 193, 214, 216, 218,
 220-21, 223, 241, 244,
 275, 279, 290, 296,

308-9, 314, 325,
 337-38, 343
 Tilak, Bal Gangadhar,
 80, 83-86
 Tillich, Paul, 7
 Tingley, Katherine, 70
 Torch Bearer of Truth,
 275
 Trevelyan, G. M., 63
 Tuveson, Ernest Lee, 27,
 29

ultimate concern, 7-10,
 17

Upaniṣads, 123, 164,
 216, 218

utility, 10, 132, 135
 utopianism, 37

Voysey, Charles, 47,
 116

Wadia, B. P., 74, 79,
 82

Watts, Charles, 53

Webb, Beatrice, 114

Wedgewood, James, 90,
 92-94, 104, 279,
 315

West, Geoffrey, 4

Wheeler, J. M., 58

will, 12-13, 22, 176-
 77, 191-92, 211,
 219-20, 222, 230,
 243, 248, 312

Women's Indian

Association, 83

World Goodwill, 330

World Mother, 95

World-Teacher (the
 Christ), 3, 5-6,
 13, 34, 73-76,
 78-79, 90, 94-96,
 103-4, 193, 198-99,
 251-52, 263, 266-71,
 273-75, 277, 279,
 283-88, 292-93, 295-97
 307-8, 312-15, 317-19,
 323-25,, 327-36

yoga, 218-21, 223, 265,
 282

Young Men's Indian
 Association, 79

A050554
 THEOLOGY LIBRARY
 CLAREMONT, CALIF.

STUDIES IN WOMEN AND RELIGION

1. Joyce L. Irwin, **Womanhood in Radical Protestantism: 1525-1675**
2. Elizabeth A. Clark, **Jerome, Chrysostom and Friends: Essays and Translations**
3. Maureen Muldoon, **Abortion: An Annotated Indexed Bibliography**
4. **Lucretia Mott: Her Complete Speeches and Sermons**, edited by Dana Greene
5. Lorine M. Getz, **Flannery O'Connor: Her Life, Library and Book Reviews**
6. Ben Kimpel, **Emily Dickinson as Philosopher**
7. Jean LaPorte, **The Role of Women in Early Christianity**
8. Gayle Kimball, **The Religious Ideas of Harriet Beecher Stowe: Her Gospel of Womanhood**
9. **John Chrysostom: On Virginity; Against Remarriage**, translated by Sally Rieger Shore
10. Dale A. Johnson, **Women in English Religion: 1700-1925**
11. Earl Kent Brown, **Women of Mr. Wesley's Methodism**
12. Ellen M. Umansky, **Lily Montagu and the Advancement of Liberal Judaism: From Vision to Vocation**
13. Ellen NicKenzie Lawson, **The Three Sarahs: Documents of Antebellum Black College Women**
14. Elizabeth A. Clark, **The Life of Melania the Younger: Introduction, Translation and Commentary**
15. **Lily Montagu: Sermons, Addresses, Letters and Prayers**, edited by Ellen M. Umansky
16. Marjorie Procter-Smith, **Women in Shaker Community and Worship: A Feminist Analysis of the Uses of Religious Symbolism**
17. Anne Barstow, **Joan of Arc: Heretic, Mystic, Shaman**
18. Marta Powell Harley, **A Revelation of Purgatory by an Unknown Fifteenth Century Woman Visionary: Introduction, Critical Text, and Translation**
19. Sr. Caritas McCarthy, **The Spirituality of Cornelia Connelly: In God, For God, With God**

20. Elizabeth A. Clark, **Ascetic Piety and Women's Faith: Essays in Late Ancient Christianity**
21. Carol and John Stoneburner (eds.), **The Influence of Quaker Women on American History: Biographical Studies**
22. Harold E. Raser, **Phoebe Palmer: Her Life and Thought**
23. Virginia Burrus, **Chastity as Autonomy: Women in the Stories of Aprocryphal Acts**
24. Katherine Smedley, **Martha Schofield and the Re-education of the South, 1839-1916**
25. Madeleine Forell Marshall, **The Poetry of Elizabeth Singer Rowe, 1674-1737**
26. Catherine Lowman Wessinger, **Annie Besant and Progressive Messianism, 1847-1933**

BP
585
.B3
W44
1988

Wessinger, Catherine Lowman.
Annie Besant and progressive
Messianism (1847-1933) / Catherine
Lowman Wessinger. -- Lewiston, N.Y. :
E. Mellen Press, 1988.
vii, 380 p. ; 24 cm. -- (Studies in
women and religion ; v. 26)
Bibliography: p. [349]-371.
Includes index.
ISBN 0-88946-523-1

1. Besant, Annie Wood, 1847-1933. 2.
Theosophists--Biography. 3. Reformers
--Biography. 4. Messianism--History.
5. Messianism, Political--History. 6.
Millennialism--History. I. Title II.
Series

A050554

CCSC 12 SEP 88 17840907 CSTMxc 88-11937

